

LONGING FOR JUSTICE:
A STUDY ON THE CRY AND HOPE OF THE POOR
IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

This thesis is a theologico-exegetical study of the OT motif of the cry and hope of the poor, designed to bear on the Latin American liberationist theological context. It is divided into two parts. Part I stresses the cry as presented in different OT literary genres, whereas Part II emphasizes the related aspect of hope in the Psalms and Prophets chiefly as God's answer to the historical cry of the poor. In each part two levels of analysis are employed. A limited number of relevant key passages are subjected to a detailed exegetical study which is either followed or preceded by a broader analysis of their general context, involving the consideration of a larger number of related passages from different sections of the OT. The cry is seen as always pointing to a prevalent situation of injustice, which ultimately compels God to intervene. Its connection with the future hope of Israel is also established.

Part I comprises three chapters. Ch. 1 deals with the theme of the cry of the oppressed Hebrews in Egypt, with close attention to Ex 2:23-25; 3:7-10; 6:5-6, and ch. 1. A comparison is made between the exodian cry and the Babylonian mythology, stressing both their similarities and differences. The author presents a descriptive analysis of the oppressive situation that gives rise to the cry, the words used to express it (vocabulary of lament), God's answer to it, and how the memory of the exodian cry was preserved in different literary records of the OT, serving as a permanent reminder of the ancient belief that whenever the poor raise their cry God is bound to intervene on their behalf. Ch. 2 is a study of the Book of Job from the perspective of 24:1-12, which is examined in detail. Here again the plight of the poor is fully

analysed, and emphasis is put on the innocence of the sufferer, his perplexity and complaints against God, and the presence of hope amid confusion and despair. Ch. 3 presents a study of the Psalms of Lament, taking Ps 17 as the object of detailed analysis. Here and elsewhere particular attention is given to the vocabulary of oppression, of salvation, of lament, of the poor, and of supplication. The suppliant's character and status are examined and an indication is made of the fact that the Hebrew words ordinarily translated by "righteous", "poor", etc. should more often than not be taken in their concrete, physical sense.

Part II comprises chs. 4-7. Ch. 4, dealing with the question of future hope in the Psalms, and discussing its main sources, constitutes a general introduction to Ch. 5, which presents a thorough exegetical analysis of Ps 72 in the light of the whole Psalter. It is observed how central is the question of the liberation of the poor (which is basically tantamount to the practice of justice) in ancient Israel and in their vision and hope of an ideal future. Like Ch. 4, Ch. 6 is also in a sense introductory to the following chapter. It briefly surveys the message of the eighth century prophets (especially Amos) as a kind of hope for the poor and oppressed. It is Ch. 7, with a detailed analytical study of Is 11:1-9, which, like Ch. 5, depicts the future era of justice and universal peace under the rule of the Anointed One of Yahweh, stressing, again, the restoration of the lost harmony between God, man, and the whole of Creation.

Some of the conclusive ideas stressed throughout are: God's bias towards the poor is an undeniable fact; he is always mindful of the cry of the poor and may employ any means to attain their liberation; he demands the practice of justice which is basically understood as the liberation of the poor; justice is a

sine-qua-non condition of the achievement of real peace; worship is futile when the cry of the poor is ignored; the kingdom of God is envisaged as primarily a kingdom for the poor; it is on the effective practice of justice on behalf of the poor that the legitimacy of all instituted governing power depends.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own, and that the thesis has been composed by myself.

**For Herta and
Priscila, Dalton, Jr., and Debora,
with love and gratitude**

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	The Anchor Bible
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> , ed. J. B. Pritchard
Aq	Aquila's Greek translation of the Old Testament
Ar	The Arabic version of the Old Testament
AV	Authorized Version of the Bible
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BDB	F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, <i>Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
BJRL	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
BK	Biblischer Kommentar
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur <i>ZAW</i>
CG	A reading of one or several Hebrew manuscripts from the Cairo Geniza
DSB	The Daily Study Bible
E	Elohistic source of the Pentateuch
EB	<i>Estudios Biblicos</i>
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GNB	Good News Bible
HSAT	Die Heilige Schrift des Alten Testaments
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
IB	<i>The Interpreter's Bible</i>

ICC	International Critical Commentary of the Holy Scriptures
IDB	<i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> , ed. G. A. Buttrick
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
J	Yahwist source of the Pentateuch
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JB	Jerusalem Bible
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JCS	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
Jr	Jerome's translation of the Old Testament
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSS	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplementary Series
JSS	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KB	L. Koehler, and W. Baumgartner, <i>Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros</i>
LXX	The Septuagint
MS or MSS	Medieval manuscript or manuscripts of the Hebrew Old Testament
MT	The Massoretic text of the Old Testament
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NCBC	The New Century Bible Commentary
NEB	New English Bible
NIV	New International Version of the Bible
OTG	Old Testament Guides
OTL	Old Testament Library
P	Priestly source of the Pentateuch

Q	A reading of one or several Hebrew manuscripts from Qumran
Qlsa ^a	First copy of Isaiah from Qumran Cave 1
RB	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
RH	<i>Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuse</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version of the Bible
SP	The Samaritan Hebrew Pentateuch
SVT	Supplement to <i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
Sym	Symmachus' Greek translation of the Old Testament
Syr	The Syriac version of the Old Testament
TB	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
TBC	Torch Bible Commentaries
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , ed. G. Kittel
TDOT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> , ed. G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren
Tg	The Targum(s)
Th	Theodotion's Greek translation of the Old Testament
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
TWAT	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> , ed. G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren
Vg	The Vulgate
VOJ	<i>Vienna Oriental Journal</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WBB	Word Biblical Commentary
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZDMG	<i>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>
ZDPV	<i>Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>

INTRODUCTION

We have witnessed in the last decades, in an unprecedented way, a growing sociopolitical consciousness among the common people throughout the world, often generating political unrest which challenges totalitarianism and corruption and insists on the establishment of a better society, more just and orderly, which preserves the human rights and promotes the well-being and dignity of the people as a whole.

Whereas in the industrialized countries people are more inclined to stress our environmental problems and the need for world peace, thus fostering the creation of strong ecological and disarmament movements, in the so-called Third World, on the other hand, the emphasis has been above all on justice and freedom, thus encouraging the rise of popular movements of liberation.

Such a "Third World" phenomenon is, of course, chiefly attested in places like Latin America, where the gap between the rich and the poor is alarming; foreign corporations take easy advantage of the local populations' cheap labour and are with impunity at times involved in socioecological crimes; and the external control (in unsuspected measure) by the strong, industrialized nations is still a reality, given the overall situation of economic, military, and cultural dependence of the region.

Irrespective of its secular roots, such a generalized sociopolitical consciousness has swept across the Christian Church in Latin America, affecting the work and thought of the lay people, clergy and theologians alike,

thus giving rise to a significant Christian movement which is largely characterized by a deep concern for the poor and oppressed, awareness of the mechanisms of oppression developed by the power structures of our times, and commitment at different levels to the cause of sociopolitical transformation.

One particular and significant event in connection with this movement is the emergence of Liberation Theology, which, although first conceived in the dialogue between Latin American theologians and articulated in the form of essays and lectures, was finally fully formulated and acquired an autonomous expression with the publication of its first two basic treatises in 1971 by Hugo Assmann¹ and Gustavo Gutierrez,² both Catholic priests from Brazil and Peru, respectively.

At the heart of this movement from which Liberation Theology arose and which has been fostered by its popular consumption lies a fundamental concern for the poor. The poor are rediscovered. They are taken from the obscure and neglected background to which they have always been relegated (especially in Christian thought and theology) and put in the forefront of events and of the historical process. Theology is made from the perspective of the poor, Christians are said to have taken a "preferential option for the poor", general attention is drawn to the unfortunate masses whose lot has been for centuries in the hands of the power systems which oppress them.

In the light of all this, it was inevitable that the field of Biblical Studies in Latin America would become deeply affected. The Bible is read anew, with a new focus and new insights, and biblical scholars are compelled to adopt a new approach to biblical exegesis and theology largely in response to the growing demand for help from a Christian community which cannot find

adequate answers to their new and crucial questions in the traditional legacy of our North-Western Christian theology.³ Attention has been given, for instance, to the area of semantic investigation in an attempt to rediscover some of the (neglected) key concepts of Biblical Theology and renew some of the common expressions of our Christian language which have become stale through much conventional use.

In this connection, it has sometimes been claimed that when relevant biblico-theological topics like for instance poverty and oppression are not totally missing (or perhaps conveniently ignored) in our traditional "First World" biblical tools, they are at best minimized and neutralized in their often acerbic sociopolitical implications.⁴ It is not without reason that George Pixley, from a Latin American perspective, warns against the ideal of scientifically pure, neutral concepts, which characterizes both our Western technological society and its theology. He says:

. . . we have learned in Latin America to be suspicious of the kind of idealism that seeks "true" concepts in their purity. Often behind the beauty and desirability of the concept in the abstract lies the intention to legitimate structures that in concrete history produce misery and oppression.⁵

All of this serves to put in perspective and highlight the nature, concerns and commitment of the work made by biblical scholars in Latin America. Here mention should be made, although briefly, of some of the most representative studies of Latin American biblical scholarship, exclusively or significantly bearing on the Old Testament field, written recently by native Latin Americans or foreigners who have lived and worked in the region for a long period of time and assume the Latin American "theological ethos".

In *Marx y la Biblia: Crítica a la filosofía de la opresión*, published in 1972, Jose P. Miranda⁶ presents a stimulating study of the God of the Old Testament, who emerges in the Scriptures as the Liberator God, the champion of the poor and oppressed, and who can be known only by those who open themselves to the wretched. Attention is given to the character of God's intervention in history, which is seen as rooted in the Exodus experience and oriented toward the future establishment of a just world order. Some valuable fresh insights are given in the treatment of several concepts related to the meaning and use of some Hebrew words, particularly *r^ošā'îm*, *mišpāt*, *šedeq* and *š^odāqâ*.

Das Recht der Armen, a doctoral dissertation written in Germany by Milton Schwantes,⁷ a Brazilian Lutheran Minister, under the supervision of Hans W. Wolff, was published in 1977. Schwantes presents a thorough study of four basic Hebrew words for "poor", *raš*, *dal*, *'ebyôn* and *'ānî*, in the legal corpus of the Pentateuch, in the Prophets, and in the Wisdom literature, exploring the social aspects involved in different literary contexts.

We have already mentioned George Pixley. In his compact book, *Reino de Dios*, published in 1977,⁸ he offers a study on the motif of the Kingdom of God in all major periods of biblical history, analysing the connections between political economy and religious faith. For him, the Kingdom of God in the Bible means, in short, a society of justice, equality, and abundance, which is concretely expressed through different historical projects in different circumstances. He analyses the political project of the Israelite tribes, inspired by the Exodus experience, when the kingdom meant liberation, a struggle against the class systems that systematically exploited the working people of Israel, and the rise of David's dynasty, which, as he argues, subverted the old

project and established a new order whereby "Yahweh's kingdom became the ideological support for the exploitation of the working people".⁹

Another relevant work in this line is Jose S. Croato's *Liberacion y libertad - Pautas hermeneuticas*, published in 1978.¹⁰ Croato develops a new hermeneutical approach to the liberation theme, drawing on the work of Paul Ricoeur. He analyses the record of the Exodus event trying to disclose its "reservoir-of-meaning". He then goes to the Priestly and Yahwist records of creation (Gn 1-2), seen as the charter of the free man, who is created for freedom. His attention is drawn to man in regard to his essence and transcendence, and his mission in the world, whereby he manifests his creativity (God's image in man). He also dedicates a chapter to the prophets of Israel, stressing their threefold mission: they denounce the infidelity of Israel to its historical vocation; they bring "conscientization" to the people; and they act as "interpreters of history".

Mainly exploring the theme of oppression we have Thomas D. Hanks's *Opression, pobreza y liberacion: Reflexiones biblicas*, published in 1982.¹¹ Hanks makes a substantial linguistic analysis of the Old Testament vocabulary of oppression, studying ten basic and ten less frequent Hebrew roots for "oppression". He also dedicates particular attention to the Song of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53, reading it from the viewpoint of the reformed theology, the pentecostal tradition, and the liberation movement. One of the conclusions he emphasizes throughout is that in biblical theology oppression is viewed as the basic cause of poverty. Also concluding that "oppression" is a fundamental structural category of biblical theology he deplores the "virtual absence of this theme in classic theologies", and suggests that "English translations often hide the radicality of the biblical perception and

socio-economic analysis".¹²

Still on the theme of oppression we have *La Biblia de los oprimidos*, Elsa Tamez's short book published in 1979,¹³ originally presented as a dissertation for a Master's degree in Costa Rica. It basically consists of another study of the Old Testament vocabulary of oppression,¹⁴ framed in the Latin American liberationist style, i.e., fashioned as a dialectic dialogue between Biblical Theology and today's Latin America historical situation.

It is over against the general background we have delineated, and in line with the studies just referred to, which as a whole are designed to bear on the Latin American liberationist theological context, that the present research work is to be primarily seen. The Old Testament theological motif of the cry of the poor, although sometimes referred to or briefly touched upon in different studies, has not yet, to the best of my knowledge, been the object of a direct, exclusive and extensive treatment by Old Testament scholars, whether in Latin America or in other regions. In seeking to fill this gap our investigation thus purports to make a positive contribution not only to the process of growth and maturity of Latin American Biblical scholarship but also to Old Testament studies in general.

It goes without saying that the basic contents of this research work are not essentially new. The study of the cry of the poor has much to do with other more familiar Old Testament themes such as lament and salvation, for instance. But it is precisely the approach, the particular perspective in which such familiar themes are analysed in connection with the cry and hope (hope is intrinsically part of the cry) of the poor that confers on our study its distinctive character.

Our work intends to stress the crucial role that the neglected theme of the cry of the poor (who in the agony of suffering and oppression cry in the hope of justice) plays in the development of Israel's faith, history, legal tradition, and religious institutions. In different forms we argue that this motif is not only central to the concept of salvation in the Old Testament, but that it is the very root of the development of such a concept, a sign of which can still be seen in the universalized language of the Second Isaiah and the New Testament. Yet the theme of lament can be better understood when seen as rooted in the suffering experience of the poor and oppressed. In short we set out to show how central a place the cry of the poor occupies in the religious thought of ancient Israel. In connection with this we argue that certain terms, such as poor, righteous, servant, which are usually taken in a spiritualized form, especially in the cultic poetry of the Psalms, should more often than not be taken in their concrete, material sense.

Although cry and hope, as we said, are inextricably connected, we have decided to give special emphasis to the cry in our first three chapters (Part I) and to hope in the last four chapters (Part II). Whereas in Part I we hear the agonizing, existential cry of the poor and oppressed vividly voiced in different literary genres, in Part II we have a double answer to the cry in reference to its dual character as a rather personalized appeal for help in the historical present and as a collective, universal plea for an ultimate solution to the problem of injustice and oppression. Such a double answer is represented by the preaching of the prophets against injustice, on the one hand, and by the emergence of the expectation of a future era of justice and peace, attached to the Davidic monarchy, on the other hand, which developed into what is known as the Messianic expectation. Here we stress the fact that such an expectation was not the expression of utter alienation and abandonment, as it may appear

to be, but that it rather meant the vital preservation of an ideal which had considerable bearing on the historical life experience of God's people. Enough is said to show how the cry of the poor was as central in the reminiscences of Israel's past as it continued to be throughout its history, affecting even the fringes of time in the ideal remote future envisaged by hope.

The cry of the poor is here seen not only as an acoustic expression of their distress, or a painful sigh produced by the harshness of their plight, but above all as a clear and loud voice (although paradoxically not always audibly articulated) that points to a situation of prevailing injustice and which ultimately compels God to intervene. Thus at the heart of Israel's hope for the future lies the vivid expectation of God's irruption in history to bring about fulness of justice (which is fundamentally expressed in the deliverance of the poor, the powerless, the innocent, as a prelude to a universal era of peace and prosperity) in Israel and among the nations.

In general terms, we analyse the cry by examining the situation from which it arises, by whom it is voiced, who causes it to be uttered, how it is given expression, God's answer to it, and its consequent relevance for the future hope of Israel. We start by examining the cry of the oppressed Hebrews in the narrative of the Exodus (chapter one), which bears witness to the historical event that gave birth to the nation of Israel. We also view the echoes of this "primal cry" of Israel in other parts of the Pentateuch and throughout the Old Testament. In chapter two we turn to the Wisdom literature as it wrestles with the problem of suffering, i.e. the book of Job (actually a Wisdom dramatization in a lament form), where the cry of the oppressed and innocent is very much in evidence. In chapter three we consider the conspicuous and significant role of the cry of the poor in the Israelite cultic liturgy, by extensively exploring the

Psalms of Lament.

After a short study (chapter four) on the question of hope in the psalms, which supplies the background for and is introductory to the following chapter, we present a detailed study of a royal psalm (Ps 72), where the hope of an ideal future linked with the royal house of David is clearly outlined. Here the major focus of our attention is the character of justice of the ideal king and the centrality of the poor in the building of this new "eschatological" society.

The other half of Part II is dedicated to the exploration of our theme of hope for the poor (as an answer to their cry) in the prophetic literature. In chapter six we view the eighth century prophets (especially Amos) in their fierce and relentless social criticism as representing a particular source of hope for the poor. We then close with a detailed exegetical study of Isaiah 11:1-9, which again points to the cherished ideal future which God shall bring about in the person of his Anointed One, described as an era of justice and universal peace which seems just tailored for the poor and wretched of the earth.

As has already become apparent, we deal with all major sections and literary genres of the Old Testament, but for obvious and inevitable reasons we have to adopt a selective approach. In compensation we assess the biblical material on two different and complementary levels of analysis. On the one hand, several key relevant passages are subjected to a thorough exegetical examination in which prominence is obviously given to the elements which most directly bear on our topic. On the other hand, such exegetical studies are normally preceded or followed by a broader analysis of their context, which is primarily the book in which they are found and which also includes topically related passages from other sections of the Old Testament.

We have decided not to present long word studies in separate sections as is often done in this type of research work. We prefer to treat the words as they appear, to the extent of their relative importance, and in connection with their contextual use. The select passages, object of special exegetical treatment, are all presented in my own translation, whereas the other biblical passages, quoted as our discussion develops, are usually, at varying degrees, dependent on the text of the RSV. Numbers within brackets along with biblical citations indicate the verse numbering in MT when at variance with that of the English versions.

PART I

THE CRY OF THE POOR AND OPPRESSED

Because of the multitude of oppressions
people cry out;
they call for help because of the arm
of the mighty. (Job 35:9)

CHAPTER 1

THE CRY OF THE OPPRESSED HEBREWS IN EGYPT

1.1. THE WRITTEN RECORD OF ISRAEL'S CRY

1.1.1. Exodus 2:23-25; 3:7-10; and 6:5-6 in Translation

"It came about in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel groaned from the bondage and they cried out, and from the bondage their cry rose up to God. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And God saw the sons of Israel, and he knew (them)."^a (Ex 2:23-25)

"And Yahweh said, 'I have indeed seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and I have heard their cry from the presence of their slave-masters, for I know their sufferings.^b And I have come down to deliver them from the power of Egypt and to bring them up from that country into a good, broad land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites,^c the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And now, behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to me; and furthermore I have seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians are oppressing them. Come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh and you shall bring^d my people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.'" (Ex 3:7-10)

"Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant. Therefore, say to the sons of Israel: 'I am Yahweh; I will release you from the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their slavery; I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.'" (Ex 6:5-6)

1.1.2. Textual Notes

^a MT reads *wayyēda' 'lôhîm*, "and God knew". The clause seems to end abruptly with its object missing. Accordingly, JB sees here a corruption of the

text and expresses it by ending the clause with ellipsis, "and God knew . . ." Different attempts, however, have been made to resolve the problem, either by simply adding an object (usually "them") or by translating the verb *yāda'* intransitively, or even by adopting an emendation of the text. So other modern versions read: "and God knew their condition" (RSV); "and he took heed of it <their plight>" (NEB); "and <God> was concerned about them" (NIV); "and God took notice of them" (NASB). D. Winton Thomas,¹ appeals to an Arabic cognate and translates *yāda'* as "to care for, to keep in mind". M. Greenberg,² in the light of Gen 18:21 suggests the meaning "consider, take thought of what to do". U. Cassuto,³ understands "to know" here as "to take cognizance of the matter", appealing to the sense of *yd'/wd'* in ancient Arabic idioms and Aramaic. Dillmann,⁴ offers the emendation *wayyēra'*, "and he appeared (to them)", which then resembles Ex 6:3. The LXX reads καὶ ἐγνώσθη αὐτοῖς, "he was made known to them" of which the equivalent Hebrew would be *wayyiwwāda' 'alēhem*. This reading is preferred by BHS and Hyatt.⁵ However, in my view a solution like one of those proposed by Greenberg and Cassuto would seem more appropriate.

b MT reads "his sufferings"; SP and Vg have "his suffering" (sg.); LXX, Sym, and Tgm have the pron. suf. in the pl., "their sufferings". Fortunately, despite the variations, the meaning of the text is not altered.

c Here and in 3:17 another name appear in the list of peoples in the SP and LXX, *w^ohaggirgāšî*, "and the Girgashites", rounding up the number of the Canaanite peoples to seven. Cassuto takes note of the several instances in which groups of seven appear in the narrative and concludes that this points to intentionality in the composition or editing of the text.

d MT has *w^ohōsē*, "and he shall cause to go out", referring to Pharaoh,

while the LXX, SP and Vg read *w^ahōsē'tā*, "and you shall bring out", referring to Moses. The latter reading makes more sense, for this is the task Moses is being commissioned for, and it is the one usually followed by the modern versions. The omission of *t* at the end of MT *w^ahōsē'* could be explained as a case of haplography, for the verbal form is followed by the sign of the direct object forming originally the sequence *'t't*, which gave rise to the scribal error.

1.1.3. Literary and Historical Remarks

In spite of the fact that so many questions remain unsolved in the field of Pentateuchal criticism (and this is definitely not the place for us even to scratch the problem), the hypothesis that "it originated basically in three redactions from a series of originally independent sources",⁶ which after being combined in two successive stages was finally dovetailed into the Deuteronomistic history, seems fairly acceptable to most Old Testament critical scholars. Accordingly the Book of Exodus is seen as made up of three major sources or strands of tradition, and this is how our select passages are normally classified: Ex 2:23a is ascribed to J; 2:23b-25 to P; 3:7-8 to J; 3:9-10 to E; and 6:5-6 to P. Ex 2:23-25 serves both as conclusion of ch. 2 and introduction or preface to 3:1-4:1, the section which comprises the narrative of the call of Moses in the theophany at the burning bush, of which vv. 7-10 (the ones we have selected) are part. Ex 6:5-6 is part of 6:2-30, a section which is roughly parallel to 3:1-4:31 (JE) and traditionally described as the P account of the call of Moses.

An important factor which is to be observed here is that all three sources bear witness to the cry of the Israelites under oppression in Egypt and God's answer to it. This points to the fact that the theological importance of the Exodus event (and the cry in Egypt in particular) and its influence on Israel's

life and faith over the centuries did not depend so much on the late, final form of the text, traditionally taken in Pentateuch criticism as the result of the fusion of three different levels of tradition.

It is unquestionable that, as R. Davidson has pointed out in reference to Ex 3, "The developed tradition is an essential part of the theological thrust of the text as it existed in Israel from the time of the Exile onwards, and as it now lies before us".⁷ But it is also clear that even before being reduced to a written form (whenever and however this actually took place)⁸ the traditions concerning the Exodus from Egypt, undoubtedly founded on a substantial core of historical events, played a very important role in Israel's national and religious consciousness from the time of the settlement in Canaan and the formation of Israel's primitive tribal league or Amphictyony.⁹ As a vital part of this tradition we have the period of oppression in Egypt and the cry implied by such a condition. This is Israel's "primal cry", at the dawn of its existence as a people, which the narrative, written from a deep religious perspective, clearly seeks to emphasize.

Hyatt rightly reminds us that the book of Exodus should not be read as if it were primarily a historical record, but rather as an account of Israel's faith regarding the period of the exodus from Egypt. He also points out that

Nevertheless, the Book of Exodus professes to be history, and its narrative undoubtedly rests upon a solid core of historical happening . . . it is not possible, however, for us now to disentangle all the historical and legendary elements in this book.¹⁰

Similar opinions are presented, for instance, by G. Auzou¹¹ and S.R. Driver.¹² But it should be pointed out here that the use of the biblical narrative by modern historians in their attempt to reconstruct the history of Israel's origins

is hindered by a number of difficulties which are conveniently summarized by Miller and Hayes.¹³

Having said that, it is also important to recognize that there seems to be little difficulty concerning the identification (understood in broad, general terms) of the Hebrews with the people referred to as *'apiru* in the ancient Egyptian documents (as well as the *hab/piru* mentioned in Akkadian texts, or the *'pr* known in Ugarit). The term designates a people of socially inferior status as slaves or unskilled workmen and normally of foreign origin.¹⁴ During the reign of Rameses II (1290–1224 B.C.) they were involved in quarrying and building operations, and this strongly evokes the narrative of Ex 1:11. It is likely that Rameses II was the Pharaoh of the oppression under whom the Israelites are said to groan and cry, although the oppression could have started under Seti I (1303–1290 B.C.).¹⁵

Thus, irrespective of a complete identification of the primitive Hebrews with the *'apiru*, it is certain that all or some of the Israelites' forefathers were oppressed in Egypt at a time when the designation of *'apiru* could well have been applied to them, since they were a slave people of foreign origin. Seen from another perspective, it is not unlikely that the Israelites were part of a great horde of *'apiru* who might have been considered as fugitives from Egypt in the XII Century B.C., and that, after getting settled in Canaan, they later became known in the local dialect as Hebrews.

Excursus: The Exodian Cry and Babylonian Mythology

The narrative of the cry of the Hebrews in Egypt looks like an echo of a "cry motif" also to be found within the ancient Near Eastern mythologies. No kind of background relationship between them can be ascertained. Nevertheless, they seem to belong to a similar ancient motif, and it might be

worthwhile to take a brief look at the Mesopotamian poem known as the *Epic of Atra-hasis*, a social myth regarded as having been written in the beginning of the second millennium B.C.¹⁶

It deals with the origin and fate of humanity, under the rule of the gods, including a flood story different from that of the *Gilgamesh Epic*. It contains Babylonian aetiological details and shows more interest in anthropology and social forms than any other Babylonian epic.

The story begins at a time when, in the Sumero-Babylonian concept, mankind was non-existent as yet and the gods had to toil for their sustenance. The senior gods had agreed on their spheres of influence: Anu became the lord of the heavens; Enlil ruled the earth (one is left to infer); and Enki (also called Ea) took charge of the Apsu, "a body of water believed to lie beneath the earth, from which the springs drew their water."¹⁷

The "Igigi", the minor gods, were put to work for the other gods digging rivers and canals (on which depended the regional agriculture) under the supervision of the warrior god Enlil. The story goes on to say that the Igigi suffered heavy work day and night. Under such excessive toil and much distress, they raised heavy lamentation (*tukku*) the voice of which (*rigmu*) was heard with indifference by the senior gods.

After forty years of oppression they were complaining, backbiting, and grumbling in their digging, and they finally decided to go on strike. They set fire to their tools and surrounded Enlil's palace (the temple Ekur in Nippur) at night, taking the senior god by surprise. At once the senior gods convened an assembly and, after enquiring about the reason for the rebellion, they came up with an original idea: to create man to take over the hard labour. Thus man

was created with the expressed purpose of working for the gods. The task of his creation was entrusted to Enki and the mother goddess (variously named Mami, Mama, Nintu, and *Bēlet-ilī*, "Mistress-of-the-gods") who was helped by the fourteen birth goddesses.

As the human race increased, their noise (*rigmu*) was such that Enlil was disturbed and could not sleep. In view of this he decided to reduce humanity by plague and drought (which obviously caused hard famine), but his attempts were frustrated by the wise king Atra-hasis, who in all periods of crisis repaired to Enki, his protector, and strictly followed his cunning advice. Therefore, after striking one of his blows to reduce the annoying humankind (not unlike the Pharaoh of Ex 1 in regard to the Israelites) he recognized his failure by saying:

The peoples are not diminished,
But have become more numerous than before!¹⁸

Finally Enki's covert action on behalf of his creation was revealed, and Enlil, as one might have expected, was greatly displeased. In a council of war he laid down that no god should again rescue humanity. A decision was taken that all humankind should be destroyed by flood. Though bound by an oath to co-operate, Enki cunningly found a way to spare Atra-hasis with his family and animals in a reed boat. The flood lasted for seven days and seven nights. The gods were not pleased with the sad spectacle they saw and perceived the disadvantages of a world without humans.

Humanity, however, was saved through Enki's intervention, who then received the sympathy and support of the other gods, as they delighted themselves in the offering which Atra-hasis, in a rather clever psychological gesture, promptly instituted for them on disembarking. Enlil also accepted the

continuance of the human race, but determined that Enki and the mother goddess should organize them better. Hence the last part of the story talks about social classes and their functions, among which were included certain categories of priestesses who do not bear children. Pointing to the importance of this myth for those who heard it when it first came into being (at least in the form in which we know it), Lambert and Millard offer this explanation:

It should be remembered that the first hearers of this epic were vitally concerned with many of the issues presented. The sociological system described was that which they actually knew, and they conceived that their existence was really dependent on what Enki and Enlil did.¹⁹

There are several elements in the Epic of Atra-hasis which evoke similar features in the biblical narrative of the exodus (including the flood story the counterpart of which is not in Exodus but in Genesis). The most prominent of all is undoubtedly the cry of complaint of the Igigi or minor gods, who were oppressed under hard labour by the senior gods. Here and in the exodus narrative we have the cry of those who suffer a state of oppression and tyranny.

As the Igigi raised their cry and lament, their complaint reached the ears of the senior gods, but because these were precisely their oppressors, like Pharaoh in relation to the sons of Israel, none of them was moved to compassion. The Igigi had to work out their own way to liberation. Their rebellion, marked by a strike and an assault on the palace of Enlil, was successful. As for Pharaoh, he was likewise annoyed as he was confronted with the clear articulation of Israel's aspiration for freedom, and decided to increase the burden of the Israelites. As much in antiquity as in our modern

times the reaction of tyrannical and oppressive rulers vis-à-vis the dreams and efforts of those who seek independence and freedom invariably follows the same pattern.

It is a striking fact that the rebellion of the mythological Igigi, recorded in written form since remote antiquity, can evoke so distinctly many of the familiar social conflicts of our modern times. As far as the Babylonians are concerned, it seems that this story merely represented a dispute in the realm of the gods, without any direct connection with mankind, for the humans had not even been created. It certainly would have had no power to inspire and promote change in a society organized within the framework of a cyclical, fatalist mentality.

What about the plight of the humans as presented in the myth? It is not altogether clear that they complain because of their condition. Their noise (*rigmu*), which disturbs Enlil's sleep, is not described as a cry of complaint like that of the Igigi. From an aetiological point of view, they were supposed to be a disorganized rabble who needed to be taught the ways of civilization, as happens in the end (although it is possible that the aetiological character of the text was worked out by somebody who had himself made use of ancient stories, perhaps originally independent of each other, in order to convey his "aetiological message"). As helpless and alienated masses, created to take over the hard labour previously assigned to the Igigi by the senior gods, mankind's fate was one of complete resignation and helplessness under the control of powerful and capricious deities.

There was no question of men being able to do what the Igigi did, to promote a movement of open rebellion against the gods. Created precisely to serve them, the humans never contemplate the possibility of attaining

independence or the privileged condition of the gods. In the biblical account of Genesis 1–3 man is created by Yahweh in the same general condition of frailty and is also put to till and keep his creator's garden (it is significant that *'ādām* can also denote "humanity"). However, unlike the Epic of Atrahasis Genesis does record an incident involving man's rebellion and lust to be like God, which was immediately punished by Yahweh. But as we all know, the biblical narrative is framed within a well developed theological scheme which follows its own course.

A comparison involving Enlil and the human race on the one hand, and Yahweh and humanity on the other, might not produce more than scanty results. Besides the points of contact that we have already suggested, it is in the account of the flood that we probably find the most significant common element. But it is the differences that are most striking. Especially in regard to the exodus story, a crucial contrast is apparent: whereas Enlil is depicted as a fickle and selfish god, Yahweh, the God of the Israelites, is portrayed as a merciful and saviour God, who takes the side of the weak and oppressed. While the Babylonian myth has ultimately a conservative effect on society, by validating the prevalent social structure (which is determined by the gods, and so inviolable), the narrative of the Exodus, in its turn, except for a few passages of aetiological nature, may have a disruptive effect on society, thus becoming a permanent threat to the status quo. As the primary and most vital paradigm of salvation in the Old Testament, it introduces the God of history and freedom who defeats the gods of myth and fatalism, and who is always mindful of the cry of the oppressed throughout the ages. It is for that reason that there is always hope for those who raise their cry to him.²⁰

Despite all of this we should not fail to acknowledge the fact that there are

still a number of significant points of similarity between both stories, depending only on a slight shift of the elements of comparison. If for a moment we consider that the Babylonian gods are portrayed in human terms (their difference from men being that they are mighty and possess immortality) and that Pharaoh was believed to be a god by the Egyptians, then it is simple for us to realize, still with the exodus narrative in view, that it is Enlil and Pharaoh (both ruling on earth in control of those whom they have put to forced labour, digging canals and rivers) who play very similar roles in their respective stories, whereas the Israelites become the counterpart of the human race in the Epic of Atra-hasis.

In both stories we have oppressive gods (Enlil and Pharaoh) who exploit the weak; who are disturbed by their cry (Israel) or "noise" (humankind); who unsuccessfully try to reduce their number by means of increased oppression (Pharaoh) or by easily disposing of them (Enlil's scourges of drought and plague; Pharaoh's order for the Hebrew male babies to be thrown into the Nile); and who in the last stage in the sequence of events decide on a final and exterminating blow on their annoying human servants (Enlil's flood; Pharaoh's armies going after the Israelites at the sea of reeds), which again is not successful. As always, in both stories, the plans of the gods are frustrated by another god who protects the suffering weak, although as a whole Enki's profile is hardly comparable with that of Yahweh. At any rate, when the humans were suffering the scourges of Enlil, the god Enki pitied his creation. He looked favourably upon them and heard Atra-hasis, intercession for his people. Accordingly he acted on their behalf and brought about rescue for them. So, playing a rather similar role, we have Yahweh and Moses on the one side, and Enki and Atra-hasis on the other side. In each case the (good) god had a mediator to carry out his benevolent purpose toward his creation in

crisis, toward the innocent sufferer in his misfortune. It is also noteworthy that in both stories we have the presence of midwives, who, though designed to play a rather dissimilar role in the plot (bringing human babies to life X putting born-to-be babies to death), end up carrying out analogous tasks, by having active participation in the processes that brought to life those who were to serve the gods (to serve Pharaoh is also to serve the Egyptian gods whom he serves and in whose name he rules) through hard labour.

One's attention is also drawn by the fact that the same humans who, from the perspective of an aetiological interpretation of the epic myth, have been described as a "disorganized rabble", are here represented by Atra-hasis, a wise and cunning king, who in the conflict with the gods manages to *outsmart* them with Enki's help, bringing about single experiences of rescue for humankind. On the other hand, in Israel's titanic clash with Pharaoh in the exodus narrative, Moses manages to *overpower* him with Yahweh's help, thus bringing about the liberation of the Israelites from the Egyptian bondage.

Judging by the human like character of the Babylonian gods and the way in which men relate to them, particularly in the Atra-hasis story, we could venture the conclusion that for the Babylonians (and other ancient Near Eastern peoples as well) the ultimate role of the religious institution was, roughly speaking, to enable man to *outsmart* the gods (knowing their secret name, reciting the right cultic formulae, pleasing and appeasing them with offerings, etc.), whereas for the Israelites, bound to their God by means of a Covenant relationship, loyalty was the fundamental principle of their religious experience.

As for those experiences of rescue or deliverance lived by humanity when under the plagues of Enlil, through the clever mediation of Enki and Atra-hasis,

there is evidence that shows how they were actualized in times when similar circumstances of hardship were prevailing. The text of *Atra-hasis* is cited in one of the reports sent by astrologers and incantation priests to advise late Assyrian kings on how to make Adad send rain:

Seek the door of Adad, bring meal
In front of it. The offering of
sesame-meal may be pleasing to him,
He may rain down a mist in the morning,
So that the field will furtively bear water.

When rain has become scarce in the land of Akkad, do
this.²¹

These lines, except for the last one which is the application recommended to the king, are directly quoted from the advice given by Enki to Atra-hasis during the drought occasioned by the order of Enlil. This fact seems clearly to indicate the adoption of the principle according to which what man had done in early times, under the guidance of the gods, could be periodically repeated throughout history.²² This particular case shows that the same method employed by Atra-hasis to get Adad's rain could be used again with similar success whenever there was a drought.

Here we have an impressive parallel with the way in which the Hebrews came to use the recollection of their forefathers' experience in Egypt, though the Exodus was much more complex and significant an experience for them than the Epic of Atra-hasis seemed to be for the Babylonians. It seems clear that the suffering under Pharaoh's tyranny taught the Israelites to believe that whenever they cry under oppression and misery Yahweh hears their cry and feels compelled to intervene, in accordance with his own saving nature, disclosed in their liberation from Egypt. For them in the end, at any rate, what prevailed was not the alienating determinism and utter sense of

helplessness exemplified by humanity in the Epic of Atrahasis, but the model of historical change used by the Igigi, since they could count on the liberating power of Yahweh, their strong and compassionate ally.

1.2. FROM OPPRESSION TO LIBERATION

1.2.1. The Oppression Which Causes the Cry

The cry of the Israelites in Egypt, as the exodus narrative shows, is not raised in a vacuum, but rather originates in a very concrete situation of social oppression of which it is to be seen as an inseparable element. Here, however, we try to dissociate the cry from the situation from which it springs, but just for the sake of emphasis, and to facilitate the descriptive analysis of their features as found in the first chapters of the Book of Exodus, with particular attention to chapter one and the select passages displayed on p. 26.

Introducing in the story "a new king who did not know Joseph" (Rameses II?) v. 8 of the first chapter makes it clear that henceforth the Jacobites no longer enjoyed special privileges as those granted by the Egyptian royal court in the past. On the contrary, having increased in numbers, they came now to be seen as a potential politico-military menace to Egypt, for they constituted a fast growing ethnic minority of Asian extraction living precisely in the strategic eastern delta region of the country, and, in case of invasion (which normally occurred through the eastern boundary), they could well take the side of the Egyptian's enemies.

Before such circumstances it would naturally be expected that the king and his councillors would decide to deal wisely or shrewdly (*nithākk^o mâ lô*, 1:10) with them. Thus, for the sake of that which is nowadays called "national security" and development, the Israelites had to be put under control, under

subjection, under the power of Egypt (*yad miṣrayim*, 3:8) in such a way that, as the story goes, their increase in population would be hindered by having their labour force exhausted in Pharaoh's monumental building projects.²³

The measure thus proposed was designed to have a double effect on the Israelites: to control their overpopulation and transform it into a factor of progress for Egypt, which ultimately, of course, would result in benefit for the country's dominant classes. Those of us acquainted with the situation of the increasing population of many poor countries, whose cheap labour is unceasingly exploited by powerful transnational corporations and the national elite, are perhaps in an advantageous position to appraise the plight of the Israelites as described in the narrative.

In order to materialize their intentions the Egyptians put taskmasters, or, more literally, "captains of labour gangs" (*šārê missîm*, 1:11) over the Israelites. The term *mas* (sing. of *missîm*) normally designates a body of forced labourers and is technically used to connote the *corvée*, the system of forced labour well known in the ancient Near East, and later on introduced in Israel by Solomon (1 Kg 5:27; 9:15, 21 = 2 Ch 8:8), or perhaps even earlier by David (cf. 2 Sam 20:24; 1 Kg 4:6; 5:28; 12:18 = 2 Ch 10:18). In Jos 17:13 it could perhaps denote a forced labourer, but this fact is certain when it occurs in the expression *mas 'ōbēd* in Gn 49:15; Jos 16:10; and 1 Kg 9:21.²⁴ In 3:7 the taskmasters are referred to as *nōq̄sîm* "slavedrivers", a part. form of the verb *nāqas̄*, "to press, drive, oppress, exact", the meaning of which implies an existing situation of tyranny and oppression.

nōq̄sîm is used in chapter 5 in some connection with *šōt̄rîm*, usually rendered "foremen" (vv. 6, 10, 14, 15, 19). These were the Hebrew overseers of labour gangs, a type of officer who supervised the Hebrew labourers, being

subordinated to the Egyptian taskmasters.

From the perspective of the narrative, expressing the point of view of the victims, the taskmasters were put over the Israelites "to oppress them with their burdens." The burdens, i.e., the heavy labours or tasks imposed on the Hebrews, are called *siblôt*, pl. constr. of *siblâ* (1:11; 2:11; 5:4, 5; 6:6, 7), from the root *sbl*, to bear a heavy load", from which also come the words *sēbel*, which in Ps 81:7 and 1 Kg 11:28 connotes enforced burden or labour (elsewhere found in Ne 4:11), and *sōbel* (Is 10:27; 9:3[4]; 14:25), always used figuratively of the burden of tyranny, and conceived as if resting on shoulders as a yoke.

The burdens of the Hebrews are more concretely expressed in the prescribed work or tasks (*hoq*, 5:14, and *ma'asîm*, 5:4, 13) that they were to perform, and in the fact that a daily quota (*d̥̄bar-yôm*, 5:13; *tōken*, 5:18) was imposed on them, as in the particular case of making bricks (*lāban*, verb, 5:7, 14; *l̥̄banîm*, pl. noun, 1:14; 5:8, 14, 16, 18, 19) out of mortar (*hōmer*, 1:14), which was strengthened and made cohere by the use of some vegetal matter. Finely chopped straw (*teben*, 5:7, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13) was used during the XIX and XX dynasties. Not only in those times, but in fact throughout the whole of Egyptian history sun-dried clay bricks have been used in vast quantities as the building material *par excellence* of that region.

The oppression of the Hebrews is said to have included all kinds of work in the field (1:14 – P), i.e., agricultural work involving the particular tasks of irrigation, sowing of seed, harvesting, etc. But it was Pharaoh's colossal building projects that certainly occupied most of them. Here the appropriate tasks would mainly involve the grading of the ground, the hauling of huge stones, and the making of millions of bricks.

According to Ex 1:11 it was the Israelites (naturally among other ethnic groups) who built the store-cities of Pithom and Rameses. Pithom is the Egyptian *pr-'Itm*, "house of (the god) Atum", possibly to be identified with Tell er-Retabeth; Rameses or Raamses, the Egyptian *(pr)-r'-ms-sw*, "(house of) Rameses", usually vocalized Per-Ramessu, according to Egyptian inscriptions could be identified with the modern San el-Hajar. Per-Ramessu is believed to be the reconstruction of the town of Avaris, the Hyksos' capital, and its name was given in honour of Rameses II, who established it as his capital. According to Egyptian records it became the northern residence of the Pharaohs of the XIX and XX dynasties, while Thebes, in the south, remained as a seasonal capital.²⁵

The Hebrew root most used in Ex 1-6 to express the Israelites' oppressive situation in Egypt is *'bd*. It occurs in the form of the verb *'ābād*, "to serve" (6 times) and its derivative nouns *'abōdâ*, "service" (9 times) and *'ēbed*, "servant" (4 times). The verb is sometimes used in the sense of "to labour, work", but most often it means to work for another, or serve as a subject, whether in the secular or religious spheres. Depending on the context, the three words may be rendered, respectively, "to serve (as a slave)", "slavery", and "slave". The four occurrences of *'ēbed*, however, are limited to its usage as a self-applied denomination when respectfully addressing a superior (Moses to God, 4:10; the Hebrew foremen to Pharaoh, 5:15, 16), and as a conventional designation of court officials, i.e., the royal ministers of Egypt (Pharaoh's servants, 5:21).

Accustomed as we are with the word "work", at first sight there is nothing extraordinary in saying that the Hebrews were "working" in Egypt (1:14; 5:9, 18). However, as the details of the narrative intend to show, such work was imposed on them, for the Egyptians made the sons of Israel "serve" (Hiphil

of *'ābad*, 1:13; 6:5), i.e., they reduced them to slavery. It is important to note that the Hiphil of *'ābad* nearly always has a strong nuance of "enslaving or putting to forced labour (cf. Jer 17:4; Ez 29:18; 2 Ch 2:18; and, metaphorically, Is 43:23–24). Therefore the *work* of the Israelites was a forced labour, also described as slavery, bondage (2:23; 1:14; 5:9; 6:6, 9), what in effect happened to large sectors of the Egyptian population (mostly the Apiru) during the time of the Ramessides.

The bondage or forced labour is qualified in the text as *qāšâ* (1:14; 6:9), i.e., "hard, severe, fierce". It was later remembered as a cruel experience (Dt 26:6), and interestingly it was in the same way that the assembly of Israel, convened in Shechem to make Rehoboam king, qualified their oppression under his father Solomon (1 Kg 12:4 = 2 Ch 10:4). The plight of the Israelites was made difficult because, as the narrative depicts it, the Egyptians made the people serve with rigour (*b^apārek*, 1:13, 14), i.e., they enslaved the people with harshness, more precisely *with violence*, as the use of the root *prk* in Akkadian and Arabic clearly indicates.²⁶ Despite the possible arrangements of supposedly parallel passages that one can produce, as if they belonged to different literary sources, the narrative seems deliberately to account for a gradual hardening process to have taken place in Israel's experience of oppression in Egypt which also involves the debated question of Pharaoh's increasing obstinacy.²⁷ In 5:9 Pharaoh order his officials: "Make the labour (or bondage) heavier (or harder, *tikbad*) on the men . . ." The idea of gradual hardening of the oppression had also been expressed in 1:13–14, at least in the present form of the text, in view of the failure that represented Pharaoh's initial measure to reduce the number of the Israelites, as seen in verses 11–12.

A further step in this process is clearly seen in the story of the midwives,

when a cruel method of birth control was imposed on the Israelites (1:15–22). The passage itself, usually ascribed to E, gives account of two royal commands designed to exterminate the male children of the Hebrews, the second one (Pharaoh orders to all his people to throw every new-born Hebrew boy into the Nile; cf. v. 22) being a more drastic and effective measure than the first one, which had failed thanks to the courageous determination of the midwives who refused to serve as sanguinary instruments to a ruthless tyrant, and preferred rather to fear God and respect life. No doubt the stage is here set up for the narrative of the birth of Moses and the death of the first-born of the Egyptians later on (ch. 11).

The situation from which the outcry of the Hebrews in Egypt arises is very well expressed by the use of two major terms for oppression in the Old Testament, i.e., *lḥṣ* and *ʾnh*. In v. 9 of chapter 3 we read: “. . . I have seen the oppression (*lāḥaṣ*) with which the Egyptians ‘oppress’ (*lōḥ^aṣîm*) them.” The verb *lāḥaṣ* has a literal meaning of “to squeeze, press”, which is found in Nu 22:25; Ju 1:34; and 2 Kg 6:32. It is the story of Balaam that illustrates it better:

When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord she pressed herself (*tillāhēs*) against the wall and squeezed (*tilḥaṣ*) Balaam's foot against it, and so he beat her again (Nu 22:25).

The picture is built in such a suggestive way that we cannot help but imagine Balaam as he utters an instinctive cry out of pain, and angrily beats his beast on the spur of the moment. It would not be improper to say that the same way oranges are squeezed to yield their juice, the Hebrews were oppressed, or “squeezed”, in Egypt so as to render their strength and vitality available for Pharaoh's interests.

The use of the word *mak'ôb* (3:7) in the narrative helps to stress the

situation of misery and affliction of the people caused by the oppression. It comes from the verb *kā'ab*, "to be in pain", and such pain can be physical, as when caused by the act of circumcision or the prick of thorns (Gn 34:25; Ez 28:24), and also mental (cf. Ec 1:18; Lam 1:12). Pharaoh's "squeeze" on Israel would have caused not only physical, but mental (psychological) pain as well, as we shall stress below.

'ānāh, "to be humbled, humiliated, oppressed, afflicted", is used in 1:11-12, and the noun *'ōnā*, "poverty, affliction, oppression, humiliation", in 3:7. With the use of this root the plastic image of the Egyptian oppression given by *lāhas* is expanded by the addition of an important psychological component. The people are crushed, oppressed not only physically, but also in their spirit, in their morale. The humiliation denoted by this verb (mainly used in the Piel) can be inflicted, for instance, by imprisonment and bonds (Ju 16:5, 6, 19; Ps 105:18), by defeat in war or bondage (Gn 15:13; Ex 1:11, 12; Nu 24:24; 1 Sam 12:8; etc.), by sexual abuse, particularly when a woman is raped (Gn 34:2; Dt 21:14; 22:24, 29; Ju 19:24; 20:5; 2 Sam 13:12, 14, 22, 32; Ez 23:10, 11; La 5:11); it also involves acts of self-imposed humiliation, as for instance when one humbles himself by fasting (Lv 16:29, 31; 23:27-32; Nu 29:7; Ps 35:13; Is 58:3-5), when the suppression of the basic instincts is implied, along with external demonstrations of abasement.

In the light of the usage of this root, the oppression of the weak by the strong, of the poor by the rich (whether in the case of individuals, groups, or nations) is as improper, immoral and humiliating as when a woman is sexually violated. It also deprives the persons of the satisfaction and the normal usage of their basic instincts. Such oppression turns life meaningless and unbearable. This lack of meaning, the physical exhaustion, and the moral abasement

together end up embittering (*mārar*, 1:14) the life of the oppressed and causes them to display a total discouragement, a broken spirit (*qōser-rû^ah*, 6:9), as the exodus narrative says happened with the Hebrews in Egypt. In this condition the attitudes of the oppressed could be disappointing sometimes. However, we should recall that when people are under fierce oppression they can be nearly brutalized, and as a rule one should not expect them to behave as normal, responsible people (whatever the meaning of these words may be in the context). In other words, when a person is treated as a beast of burden we are not supposed to expect him/her to act as a normal human being. This could help to explain a couple of conflicts that Moses had with his own people in Egypt (2:13, 14; 5:19, 20) and possibly further difficulties he had to suffer.

Exploring the text as we have done so far we put in evidence the way in which the Israelite tradition came to interpret the historical experience of oppression in Egypt. The forced labour, or *corvée*, which the Israelites as well as other ethnic groups in Egypt were submitted to was subsequently remembered as extreme slavery, as a systematic persecution especially designed for Israel. Though there is every reason to believe that their service was hard and their plight miserable, Auzou reminds us, on the other hand, that the Egyptian customs were not barbarous. He adds that

. . . we do not usually find in this country the brutality and the methods that came to be common in Assyria and then in the Roman Empire, not to mention these later times. The respect to authority was enforced and the administrative discipline was rigid. However, we notice that the taskmasters and foremen employ nothing else than a stick to impose respect.²⁸

1.2.2. The Cry Which Pleads for Help

It is out of this situation of socio-physical-psychological oppression that the Israelites in Egypt utter their cry. Whether addressed to God in any explicit form or even expressed in silent or audible instinctive sighs out of pain and distress, their cry echoed in the presence of God as a powerful prayer which is then taken account of by him who moves himself to compassion for the lowly and the afflicted.

What we said as we referred to "oppression-cry" as a unit is also valid for the binomial "cry-response". The cry and its response are also so narrowly connected in the narrative, so bound together theologically that it is hard for us to break their unity, even though it is done here only for the sake of our analytical approach. Their close association, however, is to be clearly stated.

It is its capacity of rising up to God and being heard by him that makes the cry so important. Otherwise there would be no reason to give it any special consideration. It appears in the narrative as the objective reason that called God into action in the Exodus experience. Even in the Deuteronomic casuistic legislation the importance of the cry is stressed by the fact that it could be a question of life and death for a betrothed young woman (Dt 22:24, 27) when sexually assaulted.

Let us now examine the words used to express Israel's cry from bondage, taken from our passages, so as to see how their meaning and usage may shed light on the understanding of Israel's experience.

The first verb mentioned in the narrative is *'ānah*: "... and the sons of Israel groaned (*wayyē'ān^ohū*) from the bondage . . ." (2:23). *'ānah* is a reconstructed form for the verb is only used in the Niphal (12 times), and its usage is

primarily poetic. It is mostly found in the Psalms of Lament, Job and Lamentations, thus belonging to the vocabulary of lament along with the other terms for "cry" which we discuss below. It denotes "to sigh" in token of grief (Is 24:7; La 1:4, 8; Ez 9:4; 21:12; etc.) or in physical distress, as in the verse quoted above, referring to the bondage in Egypt, and in La 1:11 referring to the famished people who groan in search for food. In the same semantic line we have Joel 1:18, referring to the groan of cattle suffering for lack of pasture. A derivative noun, *'ānāhâ* (11 times), "sigh, groan", is used in connection with physical or mental distress (Job 3:24; 23:2; Ps 31:11[12]; 6:7[8]; 38:10[11]; La 1:22; Is 35:10; 51:11; Jer 45:3; Is 21:2; Ps 102:6[7]), and it is quite certain that such double meaning is implied by the verbal form used in Ex 2:23.

Yet in Ex 2:23 we have the use of a second root (*z'q*): *wayyiz'āqû*, "and they cried out". The verb *zā'āq* is mainly used in the Qal (60 times) with the meaning of "to cry, cry out, call". A couple of times it denotes to cry against one (Job 24:12; Hab 2:11), but many times its usage indicates the cry in need of help, as crying to one's aid (Ju 12:2), or to the king (2 Sa 19:29). It is, however, to God that the cry is mostly addressed (27 times: Ju 3:9, 15; 6:6, 7; 10:10; 1 Sm 7:8, 9; 8:18; 12:8, 10; 15:11; 1 Ch 5:20; 2 Ch 20:9; 32:20; Ps 22:6[7]; 107:13, 19; 142:2[3], 6[7]; Ne 9:4, 28; Is 30:19; Jer 11:11; Ho 7:14; 8:2; Jo 1:14; Mi 3:4; Hb 1:2). Only in three instances reference is made to crying to other gods (Ju 10:14; Jer 11:12; Jon 1:15), and even so in all three cases it is implied that only Yahweh can hear and deliver those in affliction. This goes hand in hand with Ps 82, where the gods are said to be judged by Yahweh because of their impotence to do justice to the poor.

In the other 25 occurrences of this verb it denotes an utterance of horror, anxiety, alarm, distress, sorrow, etc., which in any event, as the cry of the

Israelites in Egypt, is supposed to rise up to God and be heard by him (Ex 2:23; 1 Sa 4:13; 5:10; 28:12; 2 Sa 13:19; 19:5; 1 Kg 22:32 = 2 Ch 18:31; Est 4:1; Is 14:31; 15:4, 5; 26:17; 57:13; Jer 20:8; 25:34; 30:15; 42:2; 48:20, 31; La 3:8; Ez 9:8; 11:13; 21:17; 27:30).

From the five roots for "cry" occurring in our passages four of them are found in the verses ascribed to P. Ex 2:23 alone has three of them, the third one being *šw'* (reconstructed form): ". . . and their cry (*šaw'ātām*) rose up to God from their bondage." *šāwa'* is used only in the Piel (21 times at least) meaning to cry out for help, with predominant occurrences in the Psalms (9 times) and Job (8 times). This cry is usually addressed to God by man in an explicit form when in need or affliction:

In my distress I called upon the Lord,
and cried to my God for help;
From his temple he heard my voice,
and my cry to him reached his ears.
(Ps 18:6[7])

Even the cry of irrational beasts and birds when afflicted by hunger is considered a prayer to God:

.....
Who prepares for the raven its prey,
when its young ones cry to God,
and wander about without food?
(Job 38:41)

Since justice in the form of rescue or deliverance is normally expected to follow the cry, God's silence or apparent indifference makes Job perplexed and indignant:

Behold, I cry out, 'Violence!' but I am not answered;
I call aloud, but there is no justice.
(Job 19:7)

Job himself affirms to have practiced in past times what now he has expected to be done on his behalf but to no avail:

For I delivered the poor who cried,
And the fatherless who had none to help him.
(Job 29:12)

However, even Job's perplexity points to the fact that God's answer to the cry of the poor was always taken for granted, and that this had become an important component of Israel's faith, as illustrated in Ps 72:12, speaking of the ideal Davidic king:

He delivers the needy when he cries,
the poor and him who has no helper.

There are four nouns in the Old Testament which derive from this root, meaning "cry (for help)": *šûʾ* (Job 30:24; 36:19), *šôʾ* (Is 22:5, probably a war-cry), *šewaʾ* (Ps 5:2[3]), and *šawʾâ* (Ex2:23; 1 Sa 5:12; 2 Sa 22:7; Ps 18:7[8]; 34:16[17]; 39:13[14]; 40:2[3]; 102:2[3]; 145:19; Je 9:19; Lam 3:56). The latter is the one used by P in 2:23, "and their cry (*šawʾâ*) came up unto God." This noun is used 11 times in the Old Testament, mainly in poetic passages (8 times, 6 in the Psalms). With one exception, in all instances it is said that the cry (*šawʾâ*) goes or has gone up to heaven, or to God, or is uttered before him, and it is usually associated with words such as "ear" and "hear", implying God's promptness to hear and save.

The fourth root for "cry" is also found in the so-called Priestly document: "And God heard their groaning (*naʾa qātām*)" (2:24); "I have also heard the groaning of (*naʾa qat*) the sons of Israel . . ." (6:5). The noun *nəʾāqâ*, "groan, groaning", occurs two other times in the Old Testament: in Jud 2:18, where God is said to be moved to pity by *the groaning* of the Israelites because of

those who oppressed and afflicted them; and also in Ez 30:24, where it is said that Pharaoh *will groan* before the king of Babylon with *the groanings* of a mortally wounded man. The latter conveys an impressive image which could be applied to the groaning of those who suffer the type of oppression that is experienced by Israel in Egypt, so as to make clear the seriousness of their plight. The only other instance in which the verb *nā'aq* occurs is Job 24:12ab, where we find a literary parallel to Ez 30:24, though we deal here with an agro-urban context of poverty-producing social injustice:

Men groan from out of the city,
And the soul of the wounded cries for help.

In Ex 3 is found the fifth root for "cry" attested in the exodus narrative of the Egyptian oppression. The noun *š'āqâ*, "cry, outcry", from *šā'aq*, "to cry, cry out, call", is used in vv. 7 and 9 to designate the cry of the oppressed Israelites which goes up to God and is heard by him. This noun, believed to be an alternative form of *z'āqâ*, occurs 21 times in the Old Testament.

It is found in Esau's bitter cry after he was denied the blessings connected with his status of firstborn son (Gn 27:34), and in the cry of mourning and distress of the people of Israel, after being defeated by the Philistines (1 Sm 4:14). It is also used to denote the outcry of Sodom and Gommorrah which rises up to God (Gn 18:21; 19:13) denouncing their unrestrained wrong and injustice (Ez 16:49, 50), and moving God to intervene. It is, however, to express the cry of the poor and oppressed, especially as heard by God, that *š'āqâ* is mostly used (Ex 3:7, 9; 22:23[22]; 1 Sa 9:16; Job 27:9; 34:28, 28; Ps 9:12[13]; Ne 5:1; Is 5:7).

In a similar significant fashion, *š'āqâ* is the cry of distress and mourning of oppressive leaders of the people, of hostile nations, in short of all those who



are bound to suffer God's judgment (Ex 11:6; 12:30; Jer 25:36; Zep 1:10; Jer 48:3, 5; 49:21). Here, especially in the narrative of the death of the Egyptian firstborn, is clear again the divine principle of retribution, according to which the devices of the wicked are used against themselves. Pharaoh had made Israel, the "son" of God, cry because of hard bondage and the killing of their babes. Later on it is the Egyptians who cry because Yahweh had taken their firstborn sons. Throughout the Old Testament we see this retributive principle made operative in God's dealings with wicked oppressors.

The verb *ṣā'aq* appears in Ex 5:8, ". . . therefore *they cry*, 'Let us go and offer sacrifice to our God.'" In the case of Pharaoh, the tyrannical oppressor, the cry of the Israelites is only heard as an annoying sound, as a mere excuse and an intention to avoid the burdens of their forced labour, whereas for God it is the cry which denounces injustice, for the bondage cries out to heaven as the blood of Abel cried from the ground demanding reparation, after he was murdered by his brother (Gn 4:10). It is significant that this is the first recorded cry of an innocent victim in the Old Testament, and that it occurs just after the fall, the record of which (cf. the sentences passed on Adam and Eve in Gn 3) also include the vocabulary of lament (toil, trouble, pain).

ṣā'aq is predominantly used in the Qal (47 times), and in most cases the references show explicitly that the act of crying is made to Yahweh. The Israelites cry to the Lord usually out of a situation of distress and oppression, as during the harsh experiences undergone by Moses and the people (Ex 12:25; 14:10, 15; 17:4; Nu 12:13); during the Egyptian oppression as recollected elsewhere (Ex 22:23[22], 27[26]; Nu 20:16; Dt 26:7; Jos 24:7); when under the oppression of foreign nations in the time of the Judges (Ju 4:3; 10:12); and in different situations of need and trouble, whether affecting

individuals or the whole nation (2 Ch 13:14; Neh 9:27; Ps 77:1[2]; 107:6, 28; Is 19:20).

The words here studied in the light of their multiple usage, whether in explicit reference to the Egyptian bondage or other experiences of oppression, trouble and sorrow, all tend to stress the Israelite belief that God is mindful of his creation, that the agony and pain of his creatures is always before him, and that his heart is moved to compassion at the cry of the poor, the weak, the feeble, the humble, which in one way or another rises up from their situation of oppression into God's presence.

1.2.3. The Divine Response to Israel's Cry

Ex 2:23-25 seems to describe the initial process of Israel's liberation in three stages:

- the people groan and cry in their suffering;
- their cry rises up to God;
- God hears their cry.

As God heard the cry of the afflicted, oppressed and humiliated Israelites, his reaction sooner or later was bound to be manifested. And in time it came about as expressed in all three literary layers of the narrative, through the use of a series of different verbs, as shown in the list of quotations below:

Priestly Tradition:

And God heard (*wayyišma'*) their groaning,
 and he remembered (*wayyizkōr*) his covenant. . .
 And God saw (*wayyar'*) the sons of Israel,
 and he knew (*wayyēda'*) (them).
 (Ex 2:24-25)

I have heard (*šāma'tî*) the groaning . . .
 and I have remembered (*wā'ezkōr*) my covenant.
 I will release you (*w^ohōsē'tî*) from the burdens . . .
 and I will deliver you (*w^ohissaltî*) from their bondage;
 I will redeem you (*w^ogā'altî*) with an outstretched arm . . .
 (Ex 6:5, 6)

Jahwist Tradition:

I have indeed seen (*rā'itî*) the oppression of my people . . .
 and I have heard (*šāma'tî*) their cry . . .
 for I know (*yāda'tî*) their sufferings.
 I have come down (*wa'ērēd*) to deliver them (*l^ohassîlō*) . . .
 and to bring them up (*l^oha'^alōtō*) from that country into a
 good, broad land . . .
 (Ex 3:7, 8)

Elohist Tradition:

I have seen (*rā'itî*) the oppression wherewith the Egyptians
 are oppressing them
 I will send you (*w^oešlāh^akā*) to Pharaoh and
 you shall release (*w^ohōsē'tā*) my people . . . out of Egypt.
 (Ex 3:9, 10)

The narrative is very prodigal in characterizing God's reaction to Israel's cry under the Egyptian bondage, especially in the P tradition, the most eloquent in this respect, leaving little to be said by the others.

Since Yahweh is identified as "the God of the Hebrews" (Ex 3:18; 5:3; 7:16; 9:1, 13; 10:3), the oppressed, poor, and despised ethnic minority in Egypt (in fact a group of ethnic minorities leveled by their social condition), it is no wonder that he is emphatically said to "hear" their cry. The gods of Egypt are

idols who have ears but do not hear. Yahweh, on the other hand, shows himself mindful of the cry of his afflicted and humiliated people. He is not only able to hear the sound of a voice, to perceive as one perceives by the ear (cf. 2 Sa 15:10), as when Adam hears the voice of God in the garden (Gn 3:10). Even more than hearing with attention and interest (cf. Is 28:23), he listens to the cry of the afflicted as a just judge who carefully hears a judicial case (cf. Dt 1:16 and Ju 11:10, where Yahweh is the *šōmēʾ* between the elders of Gilead and Jephthah) and so is bound to act accordingly.

When man is the subject, and God or his voice, or his word, or his commandments are the object, to hear as a rule means "to obey" (Jos 24:24; Gn 22:18; Ex 23:22; Jer 34:14; Dt 11:27, 28; etc.). As for Yahweh, at the cry of the oppressed that rises up to heavens, his hearing is manifested in the fact that he acts favourably, obeying the dictates of his own nature as a just, compassionate and saving God, as we see in the Exodus narrative and in many other places in the Old Testament. The experience of Hagar in Gn 16 is an example. Verse 11 can be so rendered:

And the Angel of Yahweh said to her,
See, you are with child and shall bear a son,
and you shall call his name Ishmael,
because Yahweh has given heed (*šāma'*) to your affliction
(*'onyēk*).

By providing Hagar with a son and a promise of descendents too many to be counted (cf. v. 10) Yahweh has "heard" (or acted accordingly, or brought to an end) her misery and humiliation. In v. 6 it is made explicit that Sarai dealt harshly (verb *'ānāh*) with her, i.e., Sarai oppressed and humiliated her maidservant. But God heard her affliction, and again later on he heard the cry of the lad Ishmael, and saved him and his mother from dying in the desert, after Sarai had had them driven out from Abraham's home (Gn 21:15-17):

When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. And she went and sat down opposite him, about a bowshot away. For she said, "let me not see the death of my child." And as she sat opposite him the child raised his voice [Heb.: she raised her voice] and wept. God heard the voice of the young boy, and the Angel of God called Hagar out of the heavens. And he said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Do not fear, for God has heard the voice of the young boy where he is."

Over and over again throughout Israel's history Yahweh is revealed as the God who hears the cry of the oppressed, whether in times of national crisis under foreign oppression or of individual affliction (Ju 2:18; 4:3; 10:12; 2 Kg 13:4). In view of this the assembled worshippers are invited to praise and glorify Yahweh,

For he has not disregarded or neglected
the affliction ('^onûṭ) of the afflicted
([']ānî);
And he has not hidden his face from him,
but heard him when he cried.
(Ps 22:25[24])

The word '^onûṭ occurs nowhere else, and judging by the rendering of the ancient versions (LXX, Tg, Vg, Syr) it is possible that the original Hebrew word to be found here was ṣa'^aqat, construct of ṣ'^oāqâ, "cry". The first consonant (ṣ) could have dropped out after the final ṣ of the preceding word in the process of transmission of the text.²⁹ Nevertheless, whether we render the line "the affliction of the afflicted", or "the cry of the poor (or humble, or oppressed, or afflicted)", the basic point does not change. God's willingness to hear his cry is clearly stated, and the reason is still as it was in the time of the Judges, "For Yahweh was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them" (Ju 2:18b).

In some contexts in the Old Testament to say that God "has heard" someone's cry is to say everything, for it is implied that he has provided the

needed help or deliverance. Here, however, the historical importance and grandeur of the epic event of the Exodus prevent the narrative from being so laconic. Words, details, and images are not spared. Thus, verbs which could be considered synonymous and forming harmonious parallelism simultaneously seem to describe, stage by stage (hear, remember, see, know, deliver), God's response to the cry of the people of Israel. In other words, God hears, but the process that his hearing implies in the particular context of the Exodus is deliberately expanded and described within a marked poetic-anthropomorphic view of the Deity.

First it is said that God "remembered" (*wayyizkôr*) his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In the beginning of the narrative of the Book of Exodus a connection is established with the history of the Patriarchs. Here (2:24; 6:5) that tradition is again alluded to through the reference to an early covenant that God had made with the Patriarchs, according to the records found in the Book of Genesis, whereby God would make a great nation of their descendents and would give them the land of Canaan as inheritance. To this Gn 15:12-16, which is narrated as a God-given prophecy to Abraham, adds a reference to the sojourning of his descendants in Egypt, their captivity, and their liberation.

God is often said to remember his covenant (Gn 9:15; Ex 2:24; 6:5; Lv 26:42; Ps 105:8; 106:45; 111:5; Jer 14:21; Ez 16:60). He is in fact bringing his loyalty (*hesed*) and faithfulness (*'amûnâ*) into remembrance, i.e., into effect (Ps 25:6; 98:3; 2 Ch 6:42; Hb 3:2). Putting it in the terms of Ps 105:42, God "remembered the holy promise, and Abraham his servant." Thus the expression "remembered his covenant" serves to underline God's faithfulness in keeping his promises (cf. Lk 1:72).

It is true that Yahweh is said to forget things, and not only when he deliberately decides to do so, as in the case of sins which have been forgiven (Jer 31:34; Is 43:25; cf. the petition of Ps 25:7 and Is 64:9[8]). He is also sometimes accused by afflicted petitioners in the Lament Psalms of being a forgetful God (13:1[2]; 42:9[10]; 44:24[25]; 77:9[10]). However, in stark contrast to these facts, we find unequivocal statements of solid faith and hope in God's compassion for the poor and afflicted, assuming that in fact their cry is always before God, who sooner or later will come to grant them justice:

For he who avenges blood is mindful of them;
he does not forget the cry of the afflicted.
(Ps 9:13[12])

For the needy shall not always be forgotten,
and the hope of the poor shall not perish for ever.
(Ps 9:19[18])

In connection with these passages we can also refer to the cry of Ps 10:12 and the compassionate assurance of Is 49:14–15. *zākar* in Hebrew is more than simply "to call to mind", "to think of, or on". It is also to intervene (1 Sa 25:31; Ps 74:2; cf. Lk 1:54), especially when referring to God. When he is the one who remembers, something is going to happen. In remembering his covenant he fulfills his promises, he acts in favour of the other party. In remembering his suffering, pain-racked creatures he grants them help, or protection, or deliverance, whatever the need may be. Thus God remembered Noah and the beasts in the ark, and made the waters of the flood to recede (Gn 1:8); he remembered Abraham, and spared Lot and his daughters from the destruction of Sodom (Gn 19:29); he remembered the barren Rachel in her humiliation, and made her conceive and bear a son (Gn 30:22); he remembered Hannah who was in a similar situation and she became the mother of Samuel (1 Sm 1:19–20). In Ps 74:18–22 it is the poor, the downtrodden, and the needy

that are to be remembered, and in Ps 89:51[50] it is the king in his affliction, representing the nation, who is to be remembered by God in his mercy and faithfulness (v. 50[49]).

God has also "seen" his people in Egypt in their oppression, as the different literary strands (J, 2:25; E, 3:9; P, 2:25) state in their records. See also Ex 4:3, ". . . and that he had seen their affliction ('^onî) . . ." As for *rā'āh*, "to see", considering different contexts in which it occurs, a great variety of meanings can be assumed: to perceive, learn to know (it is sometimes parallel to *yāda'*), provide, observe, consider, examine, visit, inspect, look at with favour, etc. Some of these meanings could be easily applied to *rā'āh* in Ex 2:25 and 3:9. However, its use here, as in the case of "hear" and "remember", can never be considered as referring to a passive action, but rather to an active commitment. To say that "God saw the people of Israel" is to say that more than simply observing and even inspecting he has entered into a close personal relationship with the people to take upon himself the responsibility and the task of their liberation. A prompt, effective action follows, as God sees the affliction of Leah: "When the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb . . ." (Gn 29:31). It is noteworthy that all these three verbs, *rā'āh* (to see), *šāma'* (to hear), and *zākar* (to remember), that are employed together in reference to the liberation of the Exodus, occur also together in a couple of verses in Ps 106 amid historical recollections of national experiences of oppression and deliverance:

Nevertheless he saw their affliction
When he heard their cry.
He remembered for their sake his covenant
and relented according to his many mercies.
(Ps 106:44-45)

Moreover, as part of the divine response to the cry of Israel under the

Egyptian bondage, God "knew" (*yāda'*) the sons of Israel and their sufferings (Ex 2:25; 3:7). The basic idea conveyed by *yāda'* here is not different from that of the preceding verbs we have already considered. Its wide use also holds a variety of meanings, as to get acquainted, take notice of, regard, find out, discern, consider, observe, perceive, etc. Very often it implies a close relationship between the subject and the object of knowledge. Thus, for instance, when a man is said to have known a woman (Gn 4:1, 17, 25; 24:16; 38:26; 1 Sa 1:19; etc.), or a woman to have known a man (Gn 19:8; Nu 31:17, 18, 35; Ju 11:39), it is understood, through such an euphemistic expression, that they had an intimate, carnal relationship with each other, or sexual intercourse. In spite of the euphemistic character of the expression the idea of close, intimate identification or association between the one who knows and the one who is known is well established and is suitably represented by the use of *yāda'*. In the light of this and the fact that "to know God" involves intelligent worship and obedience (Ju 2:10; 1 Sa 2:12; 3:7; Ps 79:6; Ho 2:23; etc.), when it is said that God "knew" his people and their sufferings in Egypt we can understand that he identified himself with them in a very intimate and committed way, so as to carry out their liberation as someone who is on their side, as one of them, feeling their pains and agony, and seeking to be the God of their hearts.

To the list of verbs we have seen, denoting what could be qualified as God's preliminary steps for the liberation of Israel (if we also want to look at them as representing a progressive course of action), the Yahwist adds another one which conveys a conspicuously anthropomorphic image of the Divinity, following a pattern of style which is peculiar to this literary source. In the theophany of the burning bush God says to Moses that he has "come down" (Ex 3:8) in order to deliver the people. The use of the expression, "I

have come down" (*wa'ērēd*), from the verb *yārad*, "to descend, to go down", apparently presupposes that God has to descend from heaven to act on earth, truly an inconvenient and embarrassing limitation imposed on the Godhead. In view of this problem the explanation offered by Cassuto would seem appropriate:

The term "come down" is, in such a context, merely the normal idiom for describing Divine intervention in human affairs, and was inherited by the Hebrew tongue from the Canaanite literary tradition, which, when using this or similar phrases, understood them in their literal signification (. . .). In Hebrew this expression, like many other Canaanite phrases, continued to be used despite the fact that the concepts that the Israelites expressed by such idiomatic phrases were far different from the original Canaanite notions.³⁰

It seems doubtful, however, whether this explanation could be applied to the actual primitive Israelites whose conceptions of the Deity would have been much simpler than those of more sophisticated later generations. The expression, however, is found in writings belonging to different contexts and times throughout the Scripture. It is first attested in Gn 11:5, 7, where God is said to come down to see the city and the tower (Babel), which the sons of men were building, and to confound their language. In fact in this case the existence of an earlier Canaanite version of the tower story cannot be ruled out. Again he comes down to see (verify) the situation of Sodom and Gommorrah (Gn 18:21). He also comes down upon Mount Sinai (Ex 19:11, 18, 20; 34:5; Ne 9:13), and to the tent of meeting in the desert (Nu 11:17; 11:25; 12:5). Prophets and psalmists, in their usual poetical style, refer to the coming down of Yahweh as a might warrior (Ps 18:10[11] = 2 Sa 22:10; Ps 144:5; Is 31:4; 63:19[64:1]; 64:2[3]; Mi 1:3). All the references have a feature in common, and it is the fact that when Yahweh comes down an actual theophany is

implied, as well as, above all, great acts of judgment and deliverance. And this is precisely what we see in the coming down of Yahweh in Ex 3:8.

Another of God's preliminary actions (more decisive though) in responding to the cry of the Israelites is recorded in Ex 3:10: "Come (*l'kā*), and I will send you (*w^a 'ešlāh^a kā*) to Pharaoh and you shall release my people . . ." Here we have the insertion of an human intermediary, a representative of Yahweh (a peculiar feature of passages attributed to the Elohist) in the whole process of liberation of the people of God in Egypt. His role is very important and should not be underestimated. From now on, second only to God himself, Moses becomes the most important human character in the epic drama of the Exodus, although it is clearly understood that he is no more than an instrument of the divine action.

It is as such that Moses is called by Yahweh and is charged with a special mission. His call reminds us of the divine call of Abraham, the father of the nation (Gn 12:1-3) and more particularly that of the prophets. In this regard Noth's explanation is opportune:

J formulated the commission to Moses long before the appearance of 'classical' prophecy; thus at this early stage the arrival of a messenger of God who was sent to precede an imminent divine action was not unknown in Israel. For E too Moses is an 'envoy'; three times in this connection it is said that God 'sends' Moses (vv. 10, 12, 13), and here the same word is used which is to be employed later by the prophets to describe their office (cf. Jer. 26.12, 15).³¹

Thus the pattern of Moses' call is also followed, for instance, in the description of Isaiah's and Jeremiah's commissioning experience. They too, in similar circumstances, expressed the same fright, vacillation, and perplexity as Moses did (Ex 3:11, 13; 4:1; 6:12, 30; 10:1; Is 6:5; Jer 1:5). However, to all of them and other commissioned agents of God is given the divine promise: "I will be with

you" (Ex 3:12; Jer 1:8, 19; 15:20; 20:11; Is 40:10; 43:2, 5; cf. also Gn 26:3, 24; 28:15; Nu 23:21; Jos 1:5, 9; Ju 1:2; 6:16; 1 Sa 3:19; 1 Kg 1:37; etc.). They are not supposed to accomplish their mission in their own strength. God's presence and effective assistance goes with them.

Considering the nature of the task assigned to Moses--the liberation of the oppressed people of Israel from the Egyptian bondage--the best parallel passages to ours are found in the book of the Judges. Here, except for the elements of sin and repentance (which only become prominent later on, beginning with the celebration of the covenant at Mount Sinai), the Exodus liberation pattern is re-actualized: The people become oppressed by a foreign nation, they raise their cry to God, their cry is heard in heavens, and as a result a *môšî'a* or *šôpēṭ* or *maššîl*, i.e., a saviour or deliverer is raised from among the people to bring about their liberation (Ju 2:8; 3:9; 3:15; 4:3, 6; 6:6-7, 14; 10:12). The call of Gideon in particular distinctly recalls that of Moses. Even the call of Saul, with whom the monarchy was inaugurated, followed the same pattern (1 Sa 9:16), and obviously this fact throws some light in the interpretation of the Divine mission entrusted to the kings in Israel. Verses 15 and 16 of ch. 9 read as follows:

Now the day before Saul came, the Lord had revealed to Samuel: "Tomorrow about this time I will send you a man from the land of Benjamim, and you shall anoint him to be prince over my people Israel. He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines, for I have seen the affliction of my people, because their cry has come to me."

Four different verbs are employed in the narrative to express God's fundamental and ultimate purpose in responding to the cry of the enslaved Israelites: *hiššîl* "to snatch away, deliver" (3:8; 6:6); *hōšî'* (Hiphil of *yāsa'*), "to cause to go or come out, bring out, lead out" (3:10; 6:6); *gā'al*, "to redeem"

(6:6); and the Hiphil of *'ālāh* (*he'°lāh*) meaning "to bring up, cause to ascend" (3:8). All of them denote the basic divine action of liberation of the people from the Egyptian bondage, but each one displays its own peculiar nuances of meaning, adding new colours to the general picture.³²

In its more literal and concrete sense *hissîl* means "to take away, snatch away" (Gn 31:9-10), but many times the idea implied is that of deliverance, rescue, recovery, involving cities, family, property, etc. (cf. Ju 11:26; 1 Sa 30:8, 18, 22). The story of 1 Sa 30 reveals some similarities with that of the Exodus. Of David it is said that he set out to deliver or rescue his wives, sons, daughters, and property from the hand of the Amalekites, who had raided Ziklag, burning the city, taking the people captive and carrying them off along with the spoil. In a similar fashion Israel--God's oppressed and captive people, God's peculiar possession or treasure (Ex 19:5), also called God's son (Ex 4:22, 23)--is heroically rescued from the Egyptian bondage.

Perhaps the clearest and most suggestive evidence of the meaning of *hissîl* is seen in the idyllic acts of deliverance performed by courageous shepherds as they snatch away the prey from the mouth of wild beasts (1 Sa 17:35; Am 3:12; Ez 34:10). Likewise Yahweh has come to deliver the Israelites "from the hand" of the "predatory" Egyptians (3:8). The expression "to deliver from the hand of" (a few times with *kap*, "palm", instead of *yad*, "hand") is frequently used in the Old Testament, in many cases referring to the deliverance from Egypt (Gn 31:9; 32:11[12]; 37:21, 22; Ex 2:19; 3:8; 18:9, 10; Dt 32:29; Jos 9:26; 24:10; Ju 6:9; 9:17; 1 Sa 4:8; 7:3; 10:18; 12:11, 21; 14:48; 37:37; 2 Sa 12:7; 19:9[10]; 2 Kg 17:39; Jer 15:21; 21:12; 22:3; 42:11; Ez 13:21; 2 Ch 32:15; Ezr 8:31; Ps 31:15[16]; 82:4; 97:10; etc.). Represented by Moses, Yahweh is Israel's heroic shepherd in that he performs a remarkable act of deliverance by

snatching away his sheep (Israel) from the "mouth" of Rahab, the mythological beast which poetically came to be identified with Egypt (Is 30:7; 51:9; Job 9:13; 26:12; Ps 87:4; 89:10). Later on, when Israel was already organized as a nation, it was the poor, the weak who became prey of the aristocratic and ruling class, and of other "wild (foreign) beasts" (Ez 34:2-6). Now it is from their "mouth" that Yahweh sets himself out to rescue his sheep (vv. 7-10).

Hisšîl is used to express deliverance performed in a variety of circumstances, such as from enemies, violence, troubles, death, distress, tribulation, etc., and in many cases it is the poor, the needy, the spoiled who are clearly indicated as its beneficiary (Ps 35:10; 72:12; 82:4; Jer 20:13; 21:12; 22:3; etc.). To Jeremiah (21:12) are ascribed the following words addressed to the king of Judah:

O house of David, thus says Yahweh:
Do justice in the morning,
And deliver the spoiled from the hand of the oppressor,
Lest my fury go forth like fire,
And burn with none to quench it,
Because of the evil of your actions.

The primordial duty of the king and the ruling class was to "deliver the spoiled from the hand of the oppressor". They were supposed to follow the normative example given by Yahweh in the Exodus, and not Pharaoh's "predatory" inclinations and attitudes.

Another verb which is used to express God's response to the cry of the Israelites in Egypt is *gā'al*, "to redeem" (6:6; P). It actually means to do the part of the next of kin, to act as kinsman (*gō'el*), thus involving personal relationship (Lv 25:25; Nu 5:8; 35:12; Rt 2:20; 3:9, 12; 4:1, 3, 6; 8:14; 1 Kg 16:11). It may be the responsibility of the *gō'el* to take a kinsman's widow (Rt 3:13); redeem from bondage (Lv 25:48, 49); redeem a field (Lv 25:26, 33; Rt 4:6); claim

a kinsman (Job 3:5); be the avenger of blood (Nu 35:19, 21, 24, 25, 27; Jos 20:3, 5, 9; Dt 19:6, 12; 2 Sa 14:11); or redeem consecrated things by payment (Lv 27:13, 15, 19, 20, 31).

Yahweh is the redeemer, the *gō'ēl* of the orphans (Pr 23:11; Jer 50:34; Ps 119:154; Job 19:25; 19:15), and of his people (Is 41:14; 43:14; 44:6, 24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7, 26; 54:5, 8; 59:20; 60:16; 63:16). His people are called the redeemed, *g^o'ûlîm* (Is 35:9; 51:10; 62:12; 63:4; Ps 107:2).

Yahweh is presented as so closely identified with the despised and oppressed Hebrews to the point of being considered their next of kin, their redeemer, their avenger of blood against Pharaoh and Egypt (Ex 6:6; 15:3; Dt 15:15; Ps 74:2; 77:16[17]; 78:35; 106:10). Undoubtedly this discloses an essential and prominent feature of the God of Israel which from now on is observed throughout the Old Testament, according to which as a general rule Yahweh puts himself on the side of the poor, the needy, the weak, the humiliated, the afflicted (all those who are oppressed and kept at the margin of society) as their next of kin, and rouses himself against all sort of oppression and injustice. Even though Israel had been exiled because of her rebellion, Yahweh continued to be her *gō'ēl*, and once more he roused himself to redeem her from the exile (Is 43:1; 44:22, 23; 48:20; 52:9; 63:9; Mi 4:10; Ps 107:2; Jer 31:11).

It is a significant fact (and not often enough noticed) that *gā'āl* along with *pādah* (the other verb also meaning "to redeem") are really always used of redeeming from oppression, trouble, sickness, death. The idea of redeeming from sin (proper of the Christian theology) only occurs in Ps 130:8, and even so it is possible that "sin" here implies the idea of "troubles caused by sin". The saving pattern in the Old Testament, as our present study makes clear, is

suffering-cry-liberation, and not the familiar evangelical pattern sin-repentance-forgiveness, often read back into the Old Testament by many Christians.

Hôṣî' (Hiphil of *yāṣa'*, "to go or come out), also used (3:10; 6:6) to describe God's action in response to the cry of the Israelites, occurs 278 times in the Old Testament with the meaning of "to cause to go, cause to come out", or "to bring out, lead out". If used in reference to a person in prison or bondage, then it means "to release, set free". The latter is the most appropriate meaning for it in regard to Exodus.

Preference seems to be given to the use of this verb in the abundant references to the deliverance from Egypt throughout the Old Testament, stressing the fact that the Israelites were not on their own, but were released, were effectively lead out from Egypt, the house of bondage, by the hand of Moses (Ex 3:10, 11, 12; 6:13, 26, 27; 14:11), or more emphatically by Yahweh himself (Ex 6:7; 7:4, 5; 12:17, 42, 51; 13:3, 9, 14, 16; 16:6, 32; 18:1; 20:2; 29:46; 32:11; Lv 19:36; 22:33; 23:43; 25:38, 44, 55; 26:13, 45; Nu 15:41; 20:16; 23:22; 24:8; Dt 1:27; 4:20, 37; 5:6, 15; 6:12, 21, 23; 8:14; 9:12, 26, 28; 13:6, 11; 16:1; 26:8; Jos 24:5, 6; Ju 2:12; 6:8; 7:8, 19; 1 Sa 12:8; 1 Kg 8:16 = 2 Ch 6:5; 1 Kg 8:21, 51, 53; 9:9; 2 Ch 7:22; Ps 105:37, 43; 136:11; Jer 7:22; 11:4; 31:32; 32:21; 34:13; Ez 20:6, 9, 10, 14, 22). In the Psalms of Lament, which are going to be object of special attention in our third chapter, this verb is frequently used in connection with the cry of the afflicted as he longs to be released from distress and troubles caused by enemies, as the context often shows (Ps 25:15, 17; 31:4[5]; 68:6[7]; 107:14, 28; 142:7[8]; 143:11).

The use of this verb also serves to make explicit God's purpose to lead the people "out" of Egypt in order to accomplish something else. It would not be

enough to set them free and leave them in that foreign and hostile land. The meaning of "leading out" is made complete with the use of *'ālāh*, which means "to go up, ascend, climb", but in the Hiphil, *he'ālāh*, "to bring up, cause to ascend". In thirty-four cases this verb is used in reference to the bringing up of Israel from Egypt in the Scriptures (Ex 3:8; 17:3; 32:1; Lv 11:45; Dt 20:1; Jos 24:17; etc.).

The reason given for this sequence of actions (to deliver, to lead out, and to bring up) in 3:8 is obvious: The Hebrews will be led to a land of their own, a good and broad land, a land "flowing with milk and honey", now occupied by other peoples upon whom Yahweh in his sovereignty--as in the cases of the Flood, and Sodom and Gommorrah--has decided to execute judgment.³³ The gift of the land has already been implied in God's remembrance of his covenant with the Patriarchs.

All this makes it clear that the deliverance from the captivity in itself would not be enough. This and the major ensuing events, as recorded in the Pentateuch and forming its basic structure, all belong together in the narrative, representing the logical, successive stages of a whole process of liberation which represents Israel's finished view of its historical past. And it is this process, ignited by the cry of the oppressed and involving the elements of divine judgment (deliverance/punishment), spiritual renewal (already suggested in Ex 3:12, 18; 4:23; 5:1, 8, 17; 6:7; 7:16; 8:20, 25-28; 9:1, 13; 10:7-11, 24-26), and peace (possession of a land of nice vineyards, "flowing with milk and honey"), that then becomes the pattern of the Israelites' future hope.

Thus God's response to the cry of distress of the oppressed Israelites in Egypt, as shown in the narrative through a variety of terms and images, is revealed in his purpose (which he eventually brought about) of effecting a

holistic liberation which encompasses a completely new setting, a totally new life for the former exploited and oppressed people.

1.2.4. Echoes of the Exodian Cry

The cry of the Israelites in Egypt is part of their whole experience in that land, which culminated in their extraordinary deliverance. Hence the cry motif shares in the well recognized fundamental importance that the liberation from Egypt has for the theology of the Old Testament.

Unlike other references to oppression, cry, and deliverance, to be found all through the history of Israel, involving the elements rebellion, punishment, forgiveness, and mercy, no historico-theological explanation is offered for the oppression of the Israelites in Egypt and the Divine intervention on their behalf, as stated in Ex 3:7. In the words of Zimmerli, "It stands there as a primitive datum, totally unexplained."³⁴ And it is precisely this primitive datum that helps us better to see that God does not need any special reason to act on behalf of the oppressed other than his love for his creation, his compassion for those who suffer, and his natural aversion to (or negation of) injustice, for the latter represents the once overcome powers of chaos which again menace the balanced world order as created by God. When his creatures cry out of anguish and pain, God is moved to pity and answers their cry.

It is seen in the experience of the Israelites that the cry of the oppressed gives voice to their plight, and that it is fundamentally out of his position as the Creator and his natural compassion for those who suffer that God he puts himself on their side and deliver them. The cry then becomes a vital part of Israel's faith, and is formally given expression in short cultic formulae, in Psalms, and prayers of lament. Westermann correctly states that

The lament implores God to be compassionate to those who suffer. This is its function: to appeal to God's compassion. All the multifarious forms of human affliction, oppression, anxiety, pain, and peril are given voice in the lament, and thus it becomes an appeal to the only court that can alter their plight.³⁵

The evidence seems to show that the historico-theological origin of the cry/lament motif, which became a vitally important component part of Israel's faith, is found in the deliverance from Egypt. The recollections of the deliverance usually include a reference to the cry, and even if no explicit mention is found its remembrance is certainly implied. In fact we cannot satisfactorily explain the deliverance of Israel from Egypt without speaking of the cry of distress and agony of those oppressed under heavy burdens and harshly treated by their taskmasters.

Dt 26:5-9, which von Rad (rather equivocally, many would rush to say) considered an ancient Credo (one among other early confessional summaries of the saving history),³⁶ is a confession of faith which was spoken by the Israelite father when, in the company of his family, he brought the first fruits of the harvest to the sanctuary. It reads as follows:

A wandering Aramean was my father; and he went down to Egypt and lived there with a few men; and there he became a great, mighty, and populous nation. And the Egyptians treated us harshly [or wickedly] and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage. *Then we cried to Yahweh, the God of our fathers, and Yahweh heard our voice, and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression; and Yahweh brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror, with signs and wonders; and he has brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.*

As in the book of Exodus (3:7-10), this important Israelite creed gives a prominent place to the cry of the oppressed in its recapitulation of the deliverance from Egypt. Cry and deliverance belong together, and this fact

underlies the function of the cry/lament in early Israel. It is a clear fact, already pointed out in a similar fashion by Claus Westermann,³⁷ that while most standard theologies of the Old Testament attribute great importance to the deliverance from Egypt (and this should not be different), nevertheless they fail to give to the cry of the oppressed its corresponding, merited attention.

Similar in its contents and structure to Dt 26:56-11 (which might have been elaborated by a Deuteronomistic redactor), though shorter, is Nu 20:14b-16, which could be the oldest historical review of Israel's early history. It appears within the message sent by Moses from Kadesh to the king of Edom, asking permission to cross his land:

You know all the adversity that has befallen us: that our fathers went down to Egypt, and we dwelt in Egypt a long time; and the Egyptians dealt harshly with us [or did evil to us] and our fathers; *then we cried to Yahweh and he heard our voice, and sent an angel and brought us forth out of Egypt;* and here we are in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your territory.

Once more the primary conditioning role of the cry of the oppressed in regard to the liberating intervention of Yahweh in Egypt is made explicit in this early historical summary. The elements "distress-cry-hearing-deliverance" form, as the hyphenation wants to suggest, a composite unity which unveils the functional lines of God's salvific process. And even when salvation or deliverance is mentioned alone, it certainly must be understood as encompassing the whole process.

Joshua's farewell speech at a convocation in Shechem offers another of the well known historical reviews in the Old Testament (Jos 24:2b-13). Here too we find an echo of the exodian cry (v. 7), though including a slight shift of focus:

And when they cried to Yahweh, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and made the sea come upon them and cover them . . .

The epic deliverance at the Red Sea (actually the Sea of Reeds in Exodus) is the point of emphasis in Joshua's recounting of the Exodus experience, and so the cry is mentioned in this connection.

In a similar fashion the cry of the Israelites is recorded in the famous prayer of Nehemiah (ch. 9), which offers another historical summary of God's saving acts in Israel's past: "And you saw the affliction of our fathers in Egypt and heard their cry at the Red Sea" (v. 9). Again Yahweh's last stroke against the Egyptians at the crossing of the sea is the focal point in reference to Israel's deliverance from Egypt, and once more the cry of the distressed Israelites is remembered, as an important historico-theological datum in the whole picture of the Divine act of liberation.

Other important and meaningful echoes of the exodian cry are found in the legal corpus of the Pentateuch. Here they represent a further step in Israel's historico-theological reflection on the issue, in that its function as precondition for the disclosure of the Divine judgment (punishment/deliverance), as the igniting element which sets God's wrath and compassion in motion, is seen as a paradigm to be actualized in new ethico-historical circumstances.

The deliverance from Egypt obviously set the foundation for the kingship of Yahweh over Israel and for the corresponding promulgation of the legal precepts required by the ruling sovereign in such contingency. Therefore the ten words of Ex 20, better known as the Ten Commandments, are preceded and headed by this important statement: "I am the Lord your God, who

brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (v. 2). Many of the legal precepts by which the Israelites become bound to Yahweh's lordship are of a socio-ethical nature. Here the condition of oppression of Israel in Egypt is analogically explored as a basis for the legal institution and the practice of justice. We have an example in Dt 24:17-22:

You shall not pervert the justice due to the alien or to the fatherless, or take a widow's garment in pledge; *but you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt and Yahweh your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this.*

When you reap your harvest in your field, and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; . . . When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over the boughs again; . . . When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean it afterward; it shall be for the alien, the fatherless, and the widow. *You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I command you to do this.*

In vv. 10-13 it is clear that to be generous to the poor, avoiding treating them oppressively, is to do justice. V. 13 ends by saying: "It shall be justice (*š^o dāqā*) to you before Yahweh your God." The context confirms in retrospect that the condition of the Israelites in Egypt was one of injustice, and consequently they are commanded not to practice against the poor and weak members of their new socio-historical environment the same kind of injustice they suffered from the Egyptians.

The so-called Book of the Covenant stresses the same principle: "You shall not oppress a stranger; you know the heart of a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Ex 23:9). Since the cry of the Israelites in Egypt pointed to a prevalent situation of injustice and moved God to intervene by an act of deliverance (obviously involving punishment against the Egyptian oppressor), if the new generations become oppressive to the poor, the weak and unprotected members of the community, the cry and lament of the

oppressed will again be uttered and heard in heaven, thus causing God's judgment to take place. This is illustrated in the words of Ex 22:21-27:

You shall not wrong an alien, and you shall not oppress him, *for you were aliens in the land of Egypt*. You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless. *If you do afflict them so that they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry*. Then my wrath will burn and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your sons fatherless.

If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be to him as a creditor, and you shall not exact interest from him. If you ever take the outer garment of your neighbour as a pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down; for that is his only covering, it is his mantle for his body; in what else shall he sleep? *And it shall be, when he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate*.

To oppress the poor and so cause him to cry out is to call upon oneself the fury of God's judgment. This is still confirmed by a legal passage in Deuteronomy (24:14-15) in a context (already alluded to) where the inversely normative character of the Egyptian oppression is made explicit:

You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your brothers or one of the aliens who are within your gates; in the same day you shall give him his hire; do not let the sun go down upon it, for he is poor, and set his heart upon it; *lest he cry against you to Yahweh, and it shall be sin in you*.

Undoubtedly this wide vision of the cry or lament of the oppressed, in reference to the cry of the Israelites in Egypt, offers a very significant basis for our further explorations of the issue in Job, the Psalms and the Prophets.

CHAPTER 2

THE CRY OF THE POOR AND INNOCENT SUFFERER

IN THE BOOK OF JOB

2.1. JOB 24:1-12: TEXTUAL AND CRITICAL CONCERNS

2.1.1. Translation of the Hebrew Text

1. Why^a are times (of judgment) not^b kept by^c the Almighty,^d
and those who know^e him do not see his days?^f
2. (The wicked)^a remove^b landmarks,
they steal flocks and pasture them.^c
3. They drive away the donkey of the orphans;
and take the widow's ox for a pledge.
4. They turn^a the needy aside from the road;^b
the poor^c of the land hide^d themselves together.
5. Like^a wild asses^b in the desert,^c
they go forth in their toil;^d
looking eagerly^e for food in the wilderness,^f
^gfor bread for the(ir) children.
6. They are (compelled) to reap^a in a field not their own,^b
and to glean^c the vineyard of the wicked.^d
7. They pass the night naked for lack of clothes,^a
and have no covering in the cold.
8. They get soaked by the mountain rainstorms,
and for want of shelter they hug the rock.
9. (The wicked) snatch^a the orphan from the breast,^b
and take^a the infant^c of the poor for a pledge.
10. (The poor) go about^a naked,^b without clothing;^c
and hungry they carry the sheaves.^d
11. (Enclosed) inside their walls^a they make oil,^b

they tread winepresses, but suffer thirst.

12. From out of the city^a the dying^a groan,^b
and the wounded^c cry out for help;
but God gives no heed^d to their appeal.^e

2.1.2. Textual and Explanatory Notes

1.a The interrogative particle *maddû^a*, "Why?" at the beginning of v. 1 is the first of a series of difficulties posed by this verse. Should the particle be omitted with Vg and NEB? Or should it be related to the second line with the first one functioning as a subordinate clause of condition? Following the second option, we would obtain a syntactic construction similar to that found in Is 5:4, *maddû^a qiwwîî la'^asôt 'anābîm wayya'as b'^aušîm*, "When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes?" This is followed by Gordis¹ who translates: "Since the times of judgment are not hidden from the Almighty, why do those . . . ?" Habel² follows the same grammatical principle, though not moving *maddû^a* from its place. The other alternative is to take this particle in a double-duty sense, as most critical authors and modern versions do: "Why . . . (and why) . . . ?" As for the rendering of Vg and NEB, there seems to be no justifiable reason for *maddû^a* to be omitted.

1.b The negative particle, *lô'*, "not," in line *a* is absent in 2 Mss and the LXX, which reads, *διὰ τί δὲ ἔλαθον ὦραι*, "Why have times been hidden from the Lord?" Dhorme³ follows the LXX, even though he himself gives enough evidence for one to conclude that the LXX is less trustful here than the MT. Furthermore, the words of Elihu in 34:23 seem to favor the MT. In quite a different fashion, Dahood does not read *l'* as a negative particle, but rather vocalizes it *le'* with the meaning of "omnipotent."⁴

1.c The preposition *mîn* is normally translated as "from," and here *miššadday*, "from the Almighty," is to be understood as "on the part of the

Almighty." In fact *mîn* is here introducing the subject of a passive clause, and therefore the expression could be more properly rendered, "by the Almighty." According to Gesenius, along with *l*^e (more frequently) and *b*^e (more rarely), *mîn* serves to attach the efficient cause (or personal agent) to the passive, e.g., Gn 9:11; Ps 37:23; and here.⁵ See also Lv 21:7 and Ec 12:11.

1.d Although taking *nisp^enû 'ittîm* and *lō'-hāzû yāmā(y)w* as perfect parallel, synonymous expressions, which would have been intended to oppose "times which are hidden" to "days which are not seen," Tur-Sinai⁶ does not discard, however, *l'* in stich *a*, but rather regards it as part of a noun introducing the evildoer whom vv. 2ff are talking about. By joining *l'* to *šdy* he supposedly retrieves an original Aramaic word, *šdyl'*, "hypocrite," (one of the clear evidences for him that the book was translated from an Aramaic original), which, as he says, the translator failed to recognize. He resorts to the Syriac (*šdyl'*, "lying flatterer;" *šdl'*, "flattery;" from *šdl*, "to seduce by flattery, deceive") and the Talmudic Hebrew (*šaddēl bid^ebārîm*, "to seduce by flattery and deception") to ground his emendation. So in Tur-Sinai's translation the reference in stich *a* is not to *šadday*, "the Almighty," but to the "hypocrite": "Why are times (of punishment) hidden from the hypocrite, . . . ?" His proposal seems interesting (though the meaning "hypocrite" does not look suitable here), but anyhow the verse is too problematic for us to utter a final judgment on Tur-Sinai's emendation.

1.e Hebrew Kethib has *wydw*, probably to be vocalized *w^eyōd^e'ô*, "he who knows him," but the Qere reads *w^eyōd^e'ā(y)w*, "those who know him," which is to be preferred.

1.f The major difficulty faced by those who translate this verse is the decision that has to be taken between the two recognized meanings of the

verb *šāpan*, "to store up" and "hide", connected or not with the negative particle (MT). See the solution suggested in p. 95f.

2.a Since line *a* is shorter than line *b* in the MT, v.2 is considered metrically defective. Because of this and the lack of an explicit subject in line *a*, scholars and versions seek to supply an additional word in order to balance the metre (3:3) or simply make better sense of the verse. Tg refers to *dr' dtwb'y*, "the generation of the deluge," which sounds strange for our context; Saadia has *qawm*, "people;" Vg has a vague *alii*, which recurs in v.5, so as to convey the idea of "some . . . others." Following the Vg, Budde⁷ adds *hēmmâ* here (so Habel, NASB), which may have fallen out after *yāmā(y)w* and emends *hēn* of v. 5 to *hēm* or *hēmmâ*. In opposition, Driver-Gray⁸ points out that, despite the example of v. 13, *hēmmâ* usually points back to something definite, and that in Hebrew "some . . . others" is not equivalent to *hēmmâ . . . hēmmâ*, but 'ēlleh . . . 'ēlleh. In Gordis' view the use of *hēmmâ* is in accordance with what he calls "the poet's practice of using a third person pronoun in order to introduce a new subject," though he himself does not employ it in his translation.⁹ For Tur-Sinai, who has supposedly retrieved through emendation the subject of stich 2a in v. 1 (see note 1.d), a simple "they" suffices. RSV and NIV have "men" for subject. It seems clear by the context that the reference here is to the *r^ošā'im*, "the wicked," who are frequently depicted as the oppressors of the poor, and who are explicitly referred to in v. 6 in the singular, *rāšā'*. Dhorme holds that the LXX, which has ὁσεβεῖς, has preserved the subject which has disappeared from MT, namely *r^ošā'im*.¹⁰ The LXX is also followed by JB and NEB, and a number of other scholars, such as Driver-Gray, Gordis, Kissane,¹¹ Pope¹², and Schoekel, who has *los malvados* for subject.¹³

2.b *yāśśîgû* is a variant spelling of *yassîgû*, from the root *swg*, "to push or move back" (normally a landmark). Again in 2 Sm 1:22 we have *nāsôg* instead of the spelling *nāsôg*. The Massorah (*Massorah Magna; Oklah W'Oklah*)¹⁴ lists 18 words spelled once with Sin instead of the regular Samekh, found in Ex 33:22; Ju 4:18; 1 Sm 5:9; Ez 41:16; Is 3:17; 5:5; Ho 2:8; 8:4; 9:12; Job 5:2; 6:2; 10:11; 10:17; 17:7; 40:31; Lm 2:6; 3:8; Ec 12:11. In fewer cases Samekh takes the place of Sin (Ps 4:7; Am 6:10; Ezr 4:5).

2.c MT reads *wayyîr'û*, "and they shall tend (or pasture, feed)," without a pronominal suffix. Vg provides it, *et paverunt eos*, whereas Syr omits *wyr'w*. LXX has σὺν ποιμένι, which means that, perhaps by way of emendation, it reads *w^orô'ô*, "and their shepherd," by dropping the Yodh (so Dhorme, Pope, JB, NEB). With Vg, RSV, NIV, Habel, Gordis, Schoekel, Driver-Gray, and Kissane, preference should be given to MT. The idea of seizing flocks along with their shepherds seems odd, very unconventional, and hence less probable than that conveyed by MT, which indicates that the wicked oppress others and get away with it.

4.a Syr makes *'ebyônîm*, "the poor," the subject of *yattû*, "they turn aside" (so Dhorme), but whereas Syr translates the verb by a passive form, Dhorme takes it intransitively, "the needy turn aside from the road." JB follows the same path, "Beggars, now, avoid the roads." Taking *yattû* transitively, as most versions and commentators do, and the wicked as its subject, seems to be still the best option.

4.b Vg, probably following Sym, παρέτρεψαν πενήτων ὁδόν, has *subverterunt pauperum viam*, "they pervert the way of the poor," in harmony with Amos 2:7, *w^oderek 'a nāwîm yattû*, but according to Pope,¹⁴ it is Amos 2:7 which should be translated in the light of Job 24:4. In an interpretative

fashion, LXX renders *middārek* by ἐξ ὁδοῦ δικαίας, "from the just way," but the term δικαίας is questioned by Jerome in his translation, as the use of an obelus symbol in the word *justa* shows.

4.c The Kethibh, *anwê-āres*, is followed by Th and Sym with πραεῖς γῆς, "the humble of the earth," as well as by Vg with *mansuetos terrae*, "the meek of the earth," and Syr with "the lowly of the earth." Tg has *mskny 'r'*, "the poor of the earth," following the Qere of the Eastern massoretes, *'a niyyê-āres*, which is the normal reading of the Codex Leningradensis, the basis for the BHS. Both *'ānāw* and *'ānî* come from the root *'nh*, "to be humbled, afflicted," but it is *'ānî*, "poor, afflicted" (occurring also in v. 9) which makes a better contrast with the wicked in the context.

4.d Both Sym and Vg, respectively with ἀφανεῖς ἐποίησαν and *oppresserunt*, regard *hb'w* as Piel, and not Pual as MT. Driver-Gray is suspicious of this sole occurrence of *hb'* in the Pual and concedes that a reflexive rather than a passive would be more natural here. He then suggests that perhaps we should read *ythb'w* for *yhd hb'w*. The Hithpael would convey the idea of hiding for fear or for safety as in Gn 3:8 and 1 Sm 13:6, and would produce a rhythmically easier line.¹⁶ However, this emendation seems less probable since the passive form *hubb°'û*, Pual of *hābā'*, indicates that the poor "are made to hide themselves" by the wicked, the same agent of the previous five stichoi. And again, the idea of hiding for fear or for safety is still implied.

5.a This verse is full of textual problems, both regarding the massoretic punctuation and sentence division. The presence of a couple of word-pairs (*midbār* // *'a rābâ*, *terep* // *lehem*) is apparently the only element that points to the possible existence of an original parallelism. After extensively reviewing how the versions and authors deal with this verse, Dhorme concludes that "a

spirit of arbitrariness seems to have presided over the various attempts to restore this unfortunate verse.¹⁷ However, despite its textual difficulties, the basic meaning of this verse does not seem to have been lost.

5.b MT begins the verse with *hēn*, usually rendered "behold." LXX has ὥσπερ, suggesting that *hêk* or 'êk, "like," is read instead of *hēn* (so also Syr). Some emend *hēn* to *hēm* or *hēmmâ*, "they." As already noted above in 2a, for Gordis the frequency of Aramaisms in the book makes this emendation unnecessary. He takes *hēn* as the 3rd person masc. pl. pronoun which, as he says, the poet frequently uses to introduce a new subject. It is to be observed that even reading *hēn* as "behold" or "they," *p^erā'im*, "wild asses," is used adverbially, in a comparative manner, as in Ho 8:9,¹⁸ and therefore the use of "like" in the translation does not necessarily imply a change of *hēn* to *hêk* or 'êk, or the omission of the comparative particle *k*.

5.c MT punctuates *pr'ym* as the plural of *pere'*, "wild ass" (also 6:5; 11:12; 39:5). Whereas Jerome has *asini feri*, LXX has ὄνοι ἐν ἄγρῳ for ὄνοι ἄγριοι, an obvious copyist's error. Understanding that, according to the Massorah, the term *p^erā'im* should be the subject of the verse ("Behold, asses in the desert . . ."), whereas the actual subject has to be the poor, Tur-Sinai prefers to read *pr'ym* as a verb. He assumes that this word is the translation of the Aramaic 'rdyn, reading 'a^arādîn, "(wild) asses," for 'ār^edîn, "fleeing," the plural participle of the root 'rd¹⁹ He then translates: "Behold, fleeing into the desert . . ." Perhaps due to the doubtful grounds of his rendering the latter has virtually been ignored by other scholars. If we were to read *pr'ym* as a verb, we could perhaps resort to *pōrē'im*, pl. participle of *pārā'*, a variant of *pārāh*, "to bear fruit, be fruitful, beget offspring," which occurs in Ho 13:15 in the Hiphil. Cf. Akkadian, *per'u*, "posterity, descendants,"

and Ugaritic *pr̄y*, "fruit," possibly related to Egyptian, *pr(i)*, "to go out;" cf. also *ṣ'ṣ'ym*, "human fruit, offspring," from the root *ys'*, "to go/come out or forth."²⁰ It seems that there could be a semantic parallelism between *pr'ym* (stich *a*) and *ys'w* (stich *b*). The verb *yāsa'* is also used in the Old Testament related to birth (2 Sm 7:12; 6:11; Gn 35:11; 1 Kg 8:19 = 2 Ch 6:9; 2 Kg 20:18 = Is 39:7; Ju 8:30; Gn 46:26; Ex 1:5; Nm 12:12; Je 1:5; 20:18; Job 1:21; 3:11; 38:9,29; Ec 5:14; Ex 21:22; Dt 28:57; etc.). Cf. especially Gn 25:25,26 and 38:28-30 where the source (womb, father's loins) is not mentioned, and *ys'* has a meaning equivalent to "to be born, be delivered." So v. 5 could perhaps be rendered as follows:

Behold, proliferating in the desert,
They come out (are born) in their toil;
Searching for food in the steppe,
There is no bread for the young ones.

5.d LXX has ὑπερ ἐμοῦ, a flagrant copyist's error for ἐπ' ἐρήμου, which translates *bmdbr*.

5.e In the light of Ps 104:23, where we read, *ys' 'dm lp'lw*, and seven Mss, most versions and commentators prefer to read the preposition *l* for *b* in *bp'lm*, rendering "to their toil" instead of "in their toil." If the translation suggested in note 5.c above is correct, there would be no need for such emendation.

5.f The words *m°šah°rê lattārep* are omitted by LXX. Similar expressions in the construct state, having a participle as *nomen regens* preceding a preposition, are not unfamiliar to the Old Testament (cf. Ez 38:11; Is 5:11; 9:1; 19:8; Jer 8:16; Ps 58:5; Job 18:2; Pr 24:9; etc.).²¹ The verb *šāhar* has as its possible original meaning "to look early, at dawn, for" (from *šahar*, "dawn"), which by extension came to mean "to seek eagerly for."

5.g A double meaning for *mšhry* (note 5.f) seems possible, especially considering that 'a_rābā may be taken in the sense of "desert, steppe," or "evening", in both cases with an accusative meaning, "in the desert" or "in the evening" (in which case the accusative sense is made clear by the presence of the suffix *h*, or it could even be explained by the double-duty principle, the *b* from *bmdbr* being understood. Dhorme, who is followed by NEB, emends 'rbh to 'ad'ereb, "until the evening" (presuming that 'd should have fallen out before 'rb, by the possible confusion of 'd with 'r), and makes it to be preceded by *bp'lm*, in the light of Ps 104:23b. So he translates V. 5:

*Like wild asses in the desert,
They come forth seeking prey;
Although they work until the evening,
No bread for the children!*²²

Line *c* could also be rendered, "Seeking early for food till the evening" (Dhorme's emendation seems unnecessary, since 'rbh, because of the suffix *h*, may indicate "toward/till the evening"), or read with a double construct, "Seeking eagerly for prey of the steppe."

5.h Stich *d*, according to the MT line division, reads literally, "The wilderness to him (is) bread for the children." Most often 'rbh is read with stich *c*, making a better line division. The major problem in line *d* is posed by the word *lw*, vocalized in the MT in the sing. as *lô*, "to him." Vg omits *lw*, as well as Syr (which also omits 'rbh). Likewise, Gordis and Habel prefer to have it deleted as a probable dittography with the *l* at the beginning of the word *lehem* which comes next. We find the following proposals among those who try to make some sense of *lw*. 1) Tur-Sinai, in a far fetched fashion, assumes that *lô* (which could have been *lām*, for both could be the translation of the original Aramaic *lh*) is an abbreviation of 'šr *lh*m, 'šr *lw*, which probably came

to be used as a kind of undeclinable noun in the sense of food, nourishment.

2) Guillaume²³ reads *lû*, "if," for *lô* and renders, "(To see) if there be food for the(ir) children." 3) Some have understood *lô* in a distributive sense, "to each one of them," resulting in the rendering, "The steppe offers to each one of them food for their children." 4) Others prefer to attach it to *lehem*, forming *lallehem*, "for food (for the children)," making stich *d* dependent on the verb *šhr* of stich *c*:

"They seek early for prey in the desert,
(they seek) for food for the children."

5) Still others read the negative particle *lô'* for *lô*, so as to render, "(There is) no food for the children." The whole verse is rather extravagant, being intended to stress how hard it is for the poor to eke out a meagre existence in the desert. In fact, options 4 and 5 are perhaps the most plausible ones in the list above.

6.a The Kethibh *yaqšîrû*, "they make (others) to harvest" (Hiphil), is a *hapax*, and does not make good sense in the context. It is probably a scribal error of a Yodh for a Waw. The Qere, *yîqšôrû*, is undoubtedly the right form.

6.b MT has *b^olîlô*, "his fodder" (so RSV, NASB, NIV, Driver-Gray, Habel, Rowley). The noun *B^olîl*, which also occurs in 6:5, is believed to denote a mixed fodder, a mixture of straw and barley, designed for animal consumption. It is obvious that mixed fodder cannot properly be said to be reaped, unless one refers to the reaping of its ingredients. Most authors find this rendering unsuitable and adopt different alternative readings. Following Houbigant,²⁴ Dhorme and others read *ballaylâ* or *ballayil*, "in the night." But night prowling (Is 1:8) by the poor as if they were thieves is out of the question in this context (against Rowley), and night hired labour can hardly be the case here,

unless a double meaning is intended. Following Ball²⁵ and Larcher,²⁶ Pope emend *blylw* to *bly'l*, "worthless man, villain," or "scoundrel" (JB). The evident intention here is to provide a parallel to *rāšā'*, "the wicked," in the second member of the bicolon. This emendation produces a good result, but the best option, in my judgment, is still the one suggested by the ancient versions (LXX, Syr, Vg, Tg), followed by NEB, GNB, Kissane, Gordis, Schoekel, and others: to read *b^olîlô* as *b^olî lô*, meaning "not his, which is not his." Cf. *b^olîmâ* (Job 26:7); *lô' lāhem* Gn 15:13; and *lô' lô* (Hb 1:6). As required by the verb, the translation has to be done in the plural, "not theirs," a fact which, according to Gordis, is justified by the assumption that *b^olî lô* has become a petrified form, whereby "not his" is equal to "alien." It is alleged that in a similar fashion *yahdāw*, originally meaning "his unitedness, with him," came to mean "together," regardless of number, gender or person.²⁷

6.c This is the only occurrence of the verb *lāqaš*, usually translated as "glean," as the parallelism with *qāšar* suggests, as well as the Piel of *lāqat*, "to gather." Drawing on the Arabic, rabbinic Hebrew, and the biblical term *malqôš*, "latter-rain," Gordis renders *y^olaqqēšû* as "they toil late." Driver-Gray and NEB, in a similar fashion, refer to "late-ripe fruit" and "late grapes," respectively. BDB takes *lāqaš* as a denominative verb of *leqeš*, "after-growth, aftermath," meaning "take the aftermath, take everything; despoil." If it is so, we could say that "to glean thoroughly" is perhaps the meaning that best fits the context, if the gleaning (as we believe) is not for the poor themselves, but for their employers, who exploit and oppress them.

6.d Some scholars have suggested the emendation *'āšîr*, "the rich," for *rāšā'*, "the wicked," apparently judging irrelevant for the text the ethical character of the landowners. Relating *rāšā'* to the Arabic *rassaġa*, Guillaume²⁸

translates it as "rich", without emendations. All of this is needless, for "rich" many times has ethical overtones; 'āšîr and rāšā' are used almost synonymously in Is 53:9; the wicked is usually mentioned in antithesis to the poor in the Old Testament (especially in the Psalms); and conversely, on the other hand, the poor are often mentioned in parallel with the righteous or just (ṣaddîq).

7.a The sole question of similarity between the stichs 7a and 10a is not enough for us to justify the emendation or deletion of 7a, as proposed by some authors.

9.a The subject of the verbs *gāzal*, "to snatch away," and *hābal*, "to take as a pledge," are obviously the wicked, and so Dhorme, Pope, and Gibson²⁹ place this verse after v. 3, whereas Kissane makes it follow v. 12. Some have considered it a marginal gloss. It seems a matter of mere scholarly convenience to have it after v. 3, at least for the sake of uniformity in the display of the subject matter, since there can be no certainty that it belonged there originally. A good alternative is found in NIV and JB, which makes sense without removing the verse from its place: the verbs are translated in the passive (perhaps reading the imperfect of Niphal, *yiggāz°lû* and *yihāb°lû*) so that the orphan and infant of the poor are made subjects. Thus NIV has v. 9:

The fatherless child is snatched from the breast;
The infant of the poor is seized for a debt.

9.b MT has 'al, "upon," which doesn't make good sense in the line, "take as a pledge upon the poor." Vg has *et vulgum*, perhaps reading *w'm* instead of *w'l*. In 1775, J. D. Michaelis³⁰ had incorrectly suggested the reading 'ōl for 'al. Kamphausen,³¹ however, following the same thread, proposed 'ul, "suckling, infant, child," (cf. Is 65:20; 49:15), which forms a perfect parallel, and has found

large acceptance today (so RSV, NIV, Driver-Gray, Rowley, Dhorme, Schoekel, Kissane, Tur-Sinai, Pope, Gordis, Habel).

10.a Tur-Sinai considers *hill^akû*, "they go about," a mistranslation of the original Aramaic *'zlw*, from the root *'zl* (also known as *'zl*), "to spin," since the meaning "to go" for *'zl* is much more common. In the light of this proposal, line 10.a is thus rendered: "They spin naked, without clothing," framed in the same style of the following lines in the text. Provided that his translation theory is correct, his suggestion would seem very appropriate. For Pope, "this is one of the most striking of Tur-Sinai's many ingenious proposals, but it is difficult to accept the theory of translation on which it is based."³²

10.b The word *'ārôm*, "naked," in the singular, is justified as an accusative of condition, or an adjective expressing state (cf. 24:7; 12:17; Is 20:4), and so it functions as an indeclinable adverb.³³

10.c LXX has ἀδίκως, "unjustly," for *bly lbwš*, "without clothing," introducing an abstract interpretation. The same type of approach occurs in v.4 and v. 11.

10.d Syr has *lh̄m*, "bread," for *'mr*, "sheaf," but the meaning of the verse is not substantially changed.

11.a This verse presents a number of difficulties related to the meaning of some words, if the text can be assumed to be correct. Its translation (so varied among versions and scholars) is mostly guesswork. Syr reads *byt šwrtm* twice over, "in the house of feasting," and "at their meal," connecting *šwrtm* with the Syriac *šrw̄t*, "meal, banquet" (cf. Dhorme). LXX has ἐν στενοῖς, "in narrow places," perhaps reading *šrw̄tm* for *šwrtm*. Vg has *inter acervos eorum*, "among their heaps," whereas Tg has *byny 'šwthwn*, "between their walls," connecting *šwrtm* with *šûr*, "wall." The word *šûrā* occurs in Jer 5:10, and its

meaning is usually taken to be the same as *šûr*, "wall" (Gn 49:22; 2 Sm 22:30; Ps 18:30), following Tg. Some prefer to read *šûrā* as "row" (so Talmud), hence, "among their rows (of olive trees)." The final Mem could be taken as enclitic or referring to the landowners, in either case. Dhorme, working on the etymology of the root *šwr*, suggests the sense of "millstones," making a better parallel with "winepresses" in stich *b*. Other less popular proposals include: *šyrtm*, "their songs" (Bickell);³⁴ *b^a 'ên-šîrôtām*, "deprived of their songs" (Sutcliffe);³⁵ *šôrôtām*, "their cows" (Hoffmann);³⁶ *timrê* (or *timôrê*) *šāw*, "deceptive palm-trees" (Tur-Sinai). The best options seem to be still "wall," "row," and "two millstones." And perhaps "wall" should be preferred, for then the idea conveyed by "between their walls" would be that of a shady, dark place (indoors), in opposition to the light of the open field, since the oil was largely employed for illumination. In other words, the verse seems to say that, "in the dark, they make the oil of light" (for others), the same way they press winepresses, and suffer thirst, or carry the sheaves, and go hungry, or spin (if Tur-Sinai is correct), but have no clothing.

11.b LXX has ἐν ἡδρευσαν, "they lie in ambush," perhaps by reading *yşwdw* instead of *yşhyrw*. Syr has *mghnyn*, "they lie down" (at their meal). Vg has *meridiari sunt*, deriving the verbal form *yashîrû* from *šôhar*, used only in the plural, *šoh^orayim*, "noon, midday," suggesting that the poor "spend the midday" working in the heat. Most often *yashîrû* is taken as a denominative from *yishâr*, "oil," as read by Tg, *y'şrwn msh*, "(between their walls) they press out the oil." This makes good sense in connection with the second stich, and perhaps should be preferred, though the Vg's interpretation is also possible. The meaning of 11a is thus to be found among these alternatives:

	the(ir) walls	press out oil
Between (or among)	the(ir) rows	they
	two millstones	pass the noonday

However, my preference along with the reasons for it have already been pointed out at the end of note 11.a above.

12.a Mt has *mē'îr m^otîm*, "out of the city of men (they groan)", or "out of the city, men (groan)," i.e., with both words connected (Dt 2:34; 3:6), or with *m^otîm* as subject. However, these readings do not seem totally satisfactory. There seems to be no deliberate contrast between oppression in the field and oppression in the city in the text. Tur-Sinai, Gordis, and others are possibly correct in rendering 'îr as "terror, fright, fear, anguish," in the light of Jer 15:8 ('îr *ûbehālôt*, "anguish and terror"). The emendation *m'bdm*, "from their labour," for *m'yr mtym* (so Steuernagel,³⁷ Fohrer,³⁸ and others) is too radical to be accepted. LXX has καὶ οἴκων ἰδίωv, "and their own houses," mistakenly reading *wbtym* for *mtym*. Sym, Tg, and Vg follow MT, whereas Syr and several Mss read *mtym* with a slightly different pointing, i.e., *mētîm*, "the dying," which is undoubtedly a good parallel to *hllym*, "the wounded," in the second stich (cf. *b^omôt hammēt* in Ez 18:32).

12.b LXX has ἐξεβάλλοντο for *yn'qu*, "they groan," meaning that the latter was apparently mistaken for a form of the root *qy'*, "to vomit" (cf. Jon 2:11). The inappropriateness of the LXX is translating our text is very often quite evident. Sym and Vg have a causative meaning, "they cause (men) to groan."

12.c The term *nepeš*, in the expression *npš-hllym* (MT) is probably to be understood here in its primitive sense of "throat" (cf. Jon 2:6; Ps 69:2), rather than as "soul" or "person," and in fact it does not even need to be translated.

With $\nu\eta\pi\acute{\iota}\omega\nu$, "children," LXX certainly reads *'llym* (Job 3:16; La 4:4; Jl 2:16; etc.) for *hllym*, "the wounded, slain".

12.d The verb *sîm* here is usually understood as if followed by *lēb* or *'al-lēb* (cf. Is 41:20; Job 4:20; 23:6), meaning "to pay heed or attention to," but like *ntn* it also has the meaning of "regard, attribute, impute" (cf. 1 Sm 22:15; Job 4:18).

12.e MT has *tiplâ*, "unseemliness, folly, wrongdoing," which makes sense, especially in view of 1:22 (so NIV, NASB), but with Syr and 2 Mss it is perhaps more appropriate to point *tplh* slightly different from MT, *t^opillâ*, "appeal, prayer" (so JB, NEB, GNB, RSV). Hence the meaning of line 12c is either that "God does not regard (or pay attention to) wrongdoing," or that "God gives no heed to (their) appeal." In short, he does not care, either to punish or help.

2.1.3. Critical and Literary Considerations

Chapter 24 of Job is part of the large poetic section of the book, which was written in dialogue form and inserted into a narrative framework, apparently derived from an older tradition, usually considered to be a folk tale of Edomite origin.

As for the genre of the book (the composition of which cannot be precisely dated),³⁹ we see it as an eclectic combination of dialogue/dispute (regarding human response to suffering) and lament (of an innocent sufferer). The book as a whole could be viewed as a paradigm of an answered lament, as has been suggested by Crenshaw.⁴⁰ Job 24:1–12 is in itself a particular and meaningful expression of Job's lament and protest put in an universal frame.

The Deuteronomistic concept of divine reward and retribution, the roots of which are linked with the experience of the Exodus and other events which made evident the liberating nature of Yahweh, came to be misinterpreted

within pious and dominant circles in Israel, who would tersely and insensibly regard prosperity as the effect of goodness, and suffering (of which poverty is an expression) the evidence of guilt and sin, of injustices previously practiced. The book of Job is a strong attack on this "pious," orthodox theological distortion, from within the Israelite Wisdom school.

Chapter 24 of Job has long been recognized as quite problematic on grounds of difference in poetic form, lack of logical sequence, internal conflict of contents, and general context. Would it actually be part of the speech of Job started in 23:1? If it is so, how much of it could be said to belong to Job's speech?

Scholars have expressed a wide range of opinions on this regard. For Westermann,⁴¹ the third cycle of speeches end with 23:17, chapters 24 to 27 consist of unfinished fragments, and ch. 24 itself is a collection of numerous individual pieces, two of which probably belonged to the original composition of the Book of Job (verses 1-4, 9, 12(?), 22, 23, 25, said to correspond and probably belong to Job's speech in ch. 21; verses 18-20, 24, perhaps belonging to one of the speeches of Job's friends), while two definitely did not (verses 5-11, except for v. 9; verses 13-17).

Though to some extent inclined to favour Westermann's analysis, Gibson believes "that we have in chapters 24-27 a number of fragments which give us valuable insights in the author's mind but their present arrangement is not due to him."⁴² He entertains the idea that the author would have composed them and kept them for a possible revision, but a disciple or later copier might have inserted them where they are now found. He then divides ch. 24 in three units according to their themes: Verses 1-3, 9, 21, 4-8, 10-12, 22, 23, 25 (attributed to Job's speech); verses 13-17 (a separate unity, but also part of

Job's speech); verses 18-20, 24 (attributed to one of Job's friends).

In trying to reconstruct a full third cycle, Pope takes 24:1-17, 21 as belonging to Job's reply to Eliphaz, and considers vv. 18-20, 22-25 as part of Zophar's third speech, after 27:8-23.⁴³ Driver-Gray does not consider ch. 24 as an inappropriate continuation of ch. 23, both in view of its poetical form and the nature of its content, but admits that verses 13-17, as well as "those parts of 18-24 which refer to the swift doom descending on the wicked,"⁴⁴ are likely to be an interpolation. Kissane accepts the text of ch. 24 as the normal sequence of ch. 23, but changes the order of some verses, part of which (vv. 2-4) are placed before 23:16. For Gordis, the special form of ch. 24 is due to its belonging to a characteristic genre of Oriental Wisdom literature consisting of complaints on the state of the world, and so, he says, "our entire chapter may have originally been an independent poem, belonging to this genre, or the poet may have followed pre-existing models of complaints in composing it."⁴⁵ He regards vv. 18-24 as quotation by Job of the conventional belief of his friends⁴⁶ (so RSV, vv. 18-20). Dhorme, Habel, Schoekel, and GNB ascribe vv. 18-24 to Zophar.

My own conclusions, after examining the text and the critical arguments, are as follows:

1) Despite the brokenness of ch. 24, its contents are on the whole perfectly compatible with ch. 23, and there is no justifiable reason to deny at least vv. 1-12 to Job's speech beginning in ch. 23. By projecting his condition of innocent sufferer in a wide world scene, in which (as he complains) the rich exploiters and oppressors are not questioned by God, and the cry of the poor is not heard, Job is backing his argument that though God is the only Judge who can restore him, yet he seems to hide himself and cannot be found

(23:3-7). At the same time he is contradicting his friends' constant allusions to the triumph of the righteous and swift destruction of the wicked (5:19ff; 8:16ff; 11:15ff; 4:18ff; 8:12ff; 15:20ff; 18:5ff; 20:6ff), especially the words of Eliphaz in 22:29-30. The correspondence in contents between the charges of Eliphaz in 22:5-11 and Job's answer in 24:1-12 is so striking that it might not be inappropriate to say that the latter is parodying the former.

2) Gordis might be right in assuming that ch. 24 could have originally been an independent poem, or maybe, I would say, different poems based on varying sources (including biblical ones), which the author rather hastily juxtaposed to form his argument, and equally hastily joined to ch. 23. The considerable corruption which the text has suffered supports such an opinion.

3) Verses 13-17 form a unit on their own, both in their contents (despite some similarities with vv. 1-12, their subject-matter and tone are suspiciously different) and their poetical form, which is virtually all made up of tristichs, over against the predominance of distichs everywhere, except between vv. 13 and 20. Indeed they look like a later expansion, but we should perhaps be cautious about issuing a final judgment on the issue.

4) Verses 18-20, 24 are also all tristichs; they seem to form a self contained unit, and express the traditional theology of Job's friends. They look obviously misplaced (they must belong to Zophar or another of Job's friends) or something else went wrong in the arrangement of the text.

5) With Gibson we should probably join vv. 21-23, 25 (all distichs, by the way) to vv. 1-12, inserting vv. 9 and 21 after v. 3. Thus orderly displayed by their subject-matter and line of thought, these verses represent as a whole a typical Jobian speech. This textual arrangement is seen below, and it is in this

order that it shall be submitted for further examination.

1. Why are times not set by the Almighty,
and those who know him do not see his days?
2. (The wicked) remove landmarks,
they steal flocks and pasture them.
3. They drive away the donkey of the orphans,
and take the widow's ox for a pledge.
9. They snatch the orphan from the breast,
and take the infant of the poor for a pledge.
21. They prey on the barren childless woman,
and to the widow do no good.
4. They turn the needy aside from the road;
the poor of the land hide themselves together.
5. Like wild asses in the desert,
they go forth in their toil;
looking eagerly for food in the wilderness,
for bread for their children.
6. They reap in a field not their own,
and thoroughly glean the vineyard of the wicked.
7. They pass the night naked for lack of clothes,
and have no covering in the cold.
8. They get soaked by the mountain rainstorms,
and for want of shelter they hug the rock.
10. They go about naked, without clothing;
and hungry they carry the sheaves.
11. Between their walls they make oil,
they tread winepresses, but suffer thirst.
12. From out of the city the dying groan,
and the wounded cry for help;
but God gives no heed to their appeal.
22. He prolongs the life of the mighty with his power,
they rise up when they should despair of life.
23. He gives them security, and they are supported;
and his eyes are upon their ways.
25. If this is not so, who can prove me false?
Who can make my speech worthless?

The following thematic structure can be easily devised:

1. The basic question: When are we going to have a trial? (v. 1)
2. The exploitation and oppression of the poor:
 - a. The wickedness of the rich oppressor (vv. 2-4, 9, 21)
 - b. The suffering of the poor oppressed (vv. 5-8, 10-12b)
3. The carelessness of God (vv. 12c, 22-23)
4. The final remark: Isn't that so? (v. 25)

2.2. GOD VIS-A-VIS HUMAN OPPRESSION AND INJUSTICE

As we noticed in the Textual Notes, v. 1 has been variously translated by scholars and versions, and this can be seen especially in reference to the meaning of *ṣāpan*. It seems that its semantic field gravitates around the general idea of "keeping apart," split in two basic meanings, the alternation of which will depend on the purpose that the writer has in mind. Firstly, if something is kept apart for eventual use, *ṣāpan* could mean "to store up, hold in reserve" (cf. Ps 119:11; Pr 10:14; Job 15:20; 23:12). Job 15:20 can be highlighted here as an appropriate example:

The wicked man writhes in pain all his days,
through all the years that are *stored up* for the ruthless.

Thus, if taken in this sense, *lō'-niṣp^enû* should be rendered, "are not stored up or held in reserve." Secondly, if something is set apart with a view to being taken out of sight, *ṣāpan* will mean, "to hide, conceal" (cf. Ex 2:2, 3; Job 14:13; Jos 2:4; Jer 16:17). The text of Ex 2:2,3, which describe Jochebed's attempts to save her baby from the Egyptians, makes a very good, concrete example:

The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that that he was a goodly child, she *hid* him three months. And when she could *hide* him no longer she took for him a basket . . .

Taken in this sense, *lō'-niṣp^enû* should be rendered, "are not hidden or concealed." It follows that the precise meaning of *ṣāpan* always depends on the context, but very often the latter is not clear thus allowing for different renderings. Sometimes the object can be said to be stored up and hidden at the same time as is the case of "these things" in Job 10:13:

Yet these things you *hid* (or *kept*) in your heart;

I know that this was your purpose.

There have been two most accepted translation-types of v. 1:

Why are times (of judgment) not set by the Almighty,
and those who know him do not see his days?

Since times (of judgment) are not hidden from the Almighty,
why do those who know him not see his days?

However, a third option, made up of elements already present in these two translations, seems to be more appropriate in relation to the context, the meaning of the verb *šāpan*, and the idea conveyed by stich *b*. The idea of having times of judgment hidden "from" the Almighty, in stich *a* of the second translation above, although rhetorically possible, does not seem to be the one conveyed by the verse, given that it is God who is in charge of setting those times and carrying them through. However, if we read *miššadday* as "by the Almighty", as done in the first translation-type (cf. Textual Note 1.c), we obtain a much more acceptable translation:

Since times of judgment are not hidden by the Almighty,
Why do those who know him not see his days?

This rendering allows us to read the verb *šāpan* either as "hide" or "store up", since the basic idea of keeping apart perhaps by neglect (in harmony with stich *b*) would be maintained. In other words, making a paraphrasis of v. 1, since times of judgment are not stored up or hidden by the Almighty carelessly or through neglect, even if he intends to disclose them sometime in the future, why do those who love him not see his days of judgment and liberation?

From this it becomes even clearer that Job is here questioning his friends' belief that God is swift to judge the wicked, as substantiated, for instance, in

these words:

For God abases the proud,
but he saves the lowly;
he delivers the innocent man.
(22:29, 30a)

Do you not know this from of old,
since man was placed upon earth,
that the exulting of the wicked is short,
and the joy of the godless but for a moment?
(20:4-5)

However, the tone of Job's words is not that of a sceptic. His doubt and bitter complaint does not spring up out of scepticism but out of faith. His is a lament of a perplexed man, of a soul in distress, whose discomfort and pains cannot be ended by pious misuse of traditional beliefs, no matter the extent of truth that can be found in them. If there wasn't faith, there would be no place for the lament of the innocent before his God.

It is precisely because Job is shielded in the Israelite theological axiom according to which the suffering of the innocent is unacceptable before God's justice, that he complains against God for his apparent delay or negligence in judging him, i.e., in proving his innocence and delivering him from his troubles. In the light of his own personal experience Job realizes that the timing of God regarding the question of retribution is not as plain as traditionally believed. He himself longs to find God, before whom he wishes to lay his case, for he knows that God, his Judge, would acquit him, as the text of 23:3-7 shows:

Oh, that I knew where I might find him,
that I might come even to his seat!
I would lay my case before him
and fill my mouth with arguments.
I would learn what he would answer me,
and understand what he would say to me.
Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power?
No; he would give heed to me.
There an upright man could reason with him,

and I should be acquitted for ever by my judge.

The trouble is that God seems to hide himself from Job. He cannot be found anywhere, as 23:8-9 shows:

Behold, I go forward, but he is not there;
and backward, but I cannot perceive him;
on the left hand I seek him, but I cannot behold him;
I turn to the right hand, but I cannot see him.

Amid Job's complaints, there appear sometimes some beams of hope. Here, for instance, when he points to God's absence, he is able to say what is expressed in 23:3-7 quoted above, and shows some confidence in what follows (23:10):

But he knows the way that I take;
when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

Though despised and abhorred by his acquaintances, friends, servants, and his whole family (19:13-22), Job does not loose heart:

But I know that my Redeemer lives,
and at last he will stand upon the earth;
and after my skin has been destroyed,
then from my flesh I shall see God.
whom I shall see on my side,
and my eyes shall behold, and not another.
My heart faints within me! (19:25-27)

However these words are explained, nobody could fail to see in them a bright light of hope. Job is sure that somehow in the future (after death?) God will give heed to his cause. Though his friends and relatives have failed him, he is certain that the same God who now afflicts him will prove to be his *gô'el* (v. 25), his Next-of-kin, his Redeemer, his Avenger, his Liberator, for that is precisely what he is supposed to be to the orphan, the widow, the poor, and all the destitutes of the earth. In his complaint against God, God himself

and no other has to be his umpire (9:33) and his witness (16:9), besides being paradoxically his adversary.

It is in the light of the aforementioned facts that Job's pessimism and complaint in ch. 24 are to be seen. His complaints across the book make up a long, sapientially stylized lament, which reflects the state of spirit of an innocent suffering man, accused of sin by his friends, while waiting to have his cause appraised by God. The lament seems to spring from the old belief, historically rooted in the experience of the Exodus, that the cry of the poor, the innocent sufferer, the victim of injustice, moves God to an action of judgment, which normally involves the connected aspects of liberation and punishment. As an elaborate form of cry, the lament is meant to have the same effect of provoking God to show his justice. But while God's saving act is awaited, faith paradoxically does not prevent perplexity and frustration to take place, but rather gives rise to it.

As an innocent sufferer, a man once rich but now in misery, wrongly accused by his friends to have acted wickedly in the past (at least his misfortunes resembled those traditionally believed to have been designed by God for the wicked), Job desperately wishes to find God, his Judge, and be acquitted by Him. That is an obsession of his.

In ch. 24, his personal situation and complaint is projected to a wider, universal frame. The same disregard that Job feels from the side of God, occasioned by his delay, he perceives in regard to others, for likewise God seems to remain inactive in face of the many injustices practiced in the world, indifferent to the cry of the oppressed. Both for him and for the others, God's intervention in judgment is what is desperately needed and waited for. It is here that the concept of *'ittîm*, "times of judgment" (v. 1) becomes

fundamental, though a point of controversy between Job and his friends. The gloomy picture depicted by Job in 24:2ff illustrates his question-complaint, "If God is so swift to judge, when is he going to act? why does he not intervene? why do his friends not see his days (of visitation, of judgement)?"

The vocable *'ēṭ* (pl. *'ittîm* is many times associated with terms like *sar*, *sārâ*, "trouble, affliction" (Jd 10:14; 2 Ch 28:22; Job 38:23; Ps 9:9[10]; 10:1; 37:39; Is 33:2; Jer 14:8; 30:7; Dn 12:1); *rā'â*, "evil, trouble" (Jr 2:27,28; 11:12; Ps 37:19; Amos 5:13; Mi 2:3); *p^oquddâ*, "visitation" (Jr 8:12; 10:15; 46:21; 50:27; 51:18; verbal form: Jr 6:15; 49:8; 50:31); *pānîm*, *'ap*, "anger, wrath" (Jr 18:23; Ps 21:9[10]; Job 20:28); *n^oqāmâ*, "vengeance" (Jr 51:6); *'ēḏ*, "calamity" (Ez 35:5); *qēs*, "end" (Dn 8:17; 11:13,35,40); *'awôn qēs*, "final punishment" (Ez 21:25[30], 29[34]); *mišpāt*, "judgment" (Ec 8:5,6; 9:12). The references are to times of trouble, of distress, of calamity, of God's anger, vengeance, and visitation, sometimes in parallel with *yôm*, "day" (Ez 21:25[30], 29[34]; Ez 27:7), and all of them point to a time of God's judgment, of doom, including the eschatological "Day of the Lord" (Zep 1:12; 3:19,20; Am 5:13; cf. v. 18; Is 2:12; 13:6,9), which was used by Duhm to explain Job 24:1. Ez 7:7-8, with its various elements (phrases and concepts) found in close association, seems to be a good text to be seen in connection with Job 24:1, for the former certainly sheds some light on the interpretation of *'ittîm* and *yôm* in the latter:

Your *doom* has come to you, O inhabitants of the land; the *time* (*'ēṭ*) has come, the *day* (*yôm*) is near, a *day* of *tumult*, and not of joyful shouting upon the mountains. Now I will soon pour out my *wrath* (*hēmâ*) upon you, and spend my *anger* (*'ap*) against you, and *judge* (*šāpat*) you according to your ways; and *repay* you for all your abominations.

In 20:28 Zophar explicitly refers to the day when the wicked will be judged by God as "the day of his (God's) wrath" (*yôm 'appô*):

.....
 The possessions of his house will be carried away,
 dragged off in the day of God's wrath.

Those who long for God's expeditious punishment on the wicked (though apparently in vain, in Job's case) are referred to as "those who know him (God)." In 18:21, the one who does not know God is called, by virtue of parallelism, an evil man, which is another denomination for the wicked of v. 5. Thus, the one who knows God is the just, or the upright of heart as Ps 36:10[11] puts it:

Continue your steadfast love (*ḥsd*) to those who know you,
 and your justice (*ṣdqh*) to the upright of heart.

The Divine intervention in human affairs sought by the just is a moral requirement of God's *ḥesed* and *ṣ^adāqā*, which "those who know him" are entitled to. It is the apparent lack of fidelity to this moral commitment on the part of God that puzzles Job. But it is clear, though, both for Job and his friends, that there is a Divine law of reward and retribution according to which the wicked must be duly punished for their injustices. However, while Job's friends see in his fate the punishing hand of God (supposing that he must have sinned to deserve what he's just got), Job in his turn sees himself wronged just like many other innocent people in the world, and tries to provoke God to a vindictive response, since he seems to delay the disclosure of his judgment, just like he does in regard to those other suffering people. Left in the dark, the just, the innocent sufferer, is led to wonder how long God is going to tolerate the wicked storing up evil on the earth.

2.3. THE EVIL FACES OF THE EXPLOITATION OF THE POOR

2.3.1. The Wickedness of the Rich Oppressor

Verse 2 is undoubtedly talking about the *r^ošā'im*, "the wicked" (see Textual Note 6.a). The wicked deeds commonly practiced by the rich in ancient Israelite society and among their neighbours are summarized in vv. 2–3, 9, 21, 4, which look thematically organized in this order, as we have already suggested under section 3.

The first charge we find against the wicked in our text is that they "remove landmarks" (*yaśśîgû g^obulôt*). The verbal form *yaśśîgû* represents *yassîgû*, Hiphil of *swg*, which literally means "to push back" (one's neighbour's boundaries). In doing so they were appropriating a portion of a weaker neighbour's property. This serious crime violated a Deuteronomic legal provision (19:14) designed to protect one's inheritance as a trust from God:

In the inheritance which you will hold in the land that the Lord your God gives you to possess, you shall not remove your neighbours landmark, which the men of old have set.

Such crime was serious enough to be included in the list of curses of Dt 27:11–26, supposedly to be recited at the covenant renewal ceremony: "Cursed be he who removes his neighbour's landmark' and all the people shall say, 'Amen!'"

Meant to express the teachings and wise counsels of the sages, the Book of Proverbs goes along with Deuteronomy in reaffirming such a prohibition, "Remove not the ancient landmark which your fathers have set" (22:28), and makes explicit allusion to two elements which are to be viewed in close connection with such unlawful and unjust practice, namely, the fact that the orphan and the widow in their evident vulnerability might have been the most

frequent victims of land crimes, and that God, believed to be their Redeemer (*gô'ēl*), their next-of-kin, their liberator, is in fact very keen to give them protection and vindicate them in such a matter of justice (Pr 15:25; 23:10-11):

The Lord tears down the house of the proud,
but he sets up the widow's boundary-stones.

Do not remove an ancient landmark,
or enter the fields of the fatherless;
for their Redeemer is strong;
he will plead their cause against you.

Not only the Old Testament sages admonish against landmark removal and other social crimes. Despite their theological peculiarities, they give expression to an ancient Wisdom tradition, for as we know a common stock of proverbial literature existed throughout the ancient Near East. The ancient piece of Egyptian Wisdom Literature called *Teaching of Amenemope*, which could have been originally composed at the end of the Eighteenth or the beginning of the Nineteenth Dynasty (c. 1300 B.C.),⁴⁷ is well known for its striking resemblance with the book of Proverbs, especially chs. 22:17-24:22. I shall quote a few lines (II, 1-2; VI, 1-6) which can be taken as a good expression of the social concern entertained by the circle of Egyptian sages, particularly in reference to the problem of misappropriation of another's land.

Guard thyself against robbing the oppressed
And against being puissant over the man of broken arm [i.e.
helpless].
Remove not the landmark at the boundaries of the arable
land,
Nor disturb the position of the measuring-cord;
Be not greedy after a cubit of land,
Nor encroach upon the boundaries of a widow. . . .
Beware of encroaching upon the boundaries of the fields,
Lest a terror carry thee off.⁴⁸

While the sages give their warn against landmark removal in the mild tone

of conventional Wisdom sayings, it behoves the prophets to denounce such crime in more direct and violent terms, as Hosea, for instance, in 5:10:

The princes of Judah have become like those who remove the
landmark;
upon them I will pour out my wrath like water.

The greed of the rich and the mighty is insatiable. By using different mechanisms for oppressing and exploiting the poor and weak they extend their boundaries in an unquenchable orgy of land appropriation, which is very explicitly denounced by Isaiah in one of his prophetic "woes" (5:8-10), and which will not be left unpunished by the Lord:

Woe to you who join house to house,
who add field to field,
until there is no more room,
and you are made to dwell alone
in the midst of the land.
The Lord of hosts has sworn in my hearing:
"Surely many houses shall be desolate,
large and beautiful houses, without inhabitant.
For ten acres of vineyard shall yield but one bath,
and a homer of seed shall yield but an ephah."

The story of Naboth's vineyard in 1 Kg 21:1-16 does not mention the crime of landmark removal, but it clearly and vividly illustrates the greed and cunning of the mighty in ancient Israelite society who always managed to find a way of getting rid of the weak or pushing them aside in order to appropriate their land. Land inheritance was basically a family's only security in ancient Israel, the loss of which would certainly lead the victims to extreme poverty.

The displacement and removal of landmarks or boundary stones was a condemned practice not only in Israel, but throughout the ancient Near East as well, as has been attested regarding the Assyrians and the Babylonians. Nonetheless, disputes and troubles on land ownership and misappropriation

seem to have persisted throughout the ages, and even today it is a crucial problem in many countries, in particular in Latin America, where native indians and peasants are driven out from the land by the rich and by big companies and transnational corporations.

The wicked is also said to "seize flocks and pasture them" (v. 2b). The verb *gāzal* (30 times in the Old Testament) means "to snatch away," "to take away with violence," "to spoil (by violence)," and it is mostly used in reference to the deeds of the powerful who defiantly take possession of the weak's property. Thus it can also be rendered "to rob." In our text, it is flocks that the wicked rob or violently take away from their neighbours and openly pasture them, probably in the lands they have also stolen. The reading of the LXX, "The wicked seize flocks *and their shepherd*," must be a misreading (see Textual Note 2.c). At any rate the expression stresses the boldness and impunity of the acts of injustice practiced by the mighty over against the weak. In other references the object seized could be a well of water (Gn 21:25), or houses and fields (Job 20:19; Mi 2:2), or even a fatherless child from his mother's breast (v. 9; we will come back to this verse further on).

Usually the references to such crimes include an allusion to the Divine punishment which shall fall upon those who commit them. In Job 20 Zophar describes in detail God's judgment upon the wicked man, pinpointing the fact that he shall loose all his (ill-gotten) riches. This was also what the ancient Egyptian sages used to teach, judging by the following lines which are recorded in the *Teaching of Amenemope* (VII, 5-10):

Do not strain to seek an excess,
When thy needs are safe for thee.
If riches are brought to thee by robbery,
They will not spend the night with thee;
At day brake they are not in thy house:

Their places may be seen, but they are not.⁴⁹

However, unlike the ancient Egyptian scholar, his counterpart, Zophar not only stresses the Divine judgment which is due upon the wicked/rich man, but he goes further and underlines the fundamental reason for the wicked's God-caused misfortune:

For he has crushed and abandoned the poor,
he has *seized* a house which he did not build.

This type of problem was certainly crucial in the eighth Century, as the prophetic records of this period show. Hosea, for instance, has an expressive prophetic "woe", a special oracle of condemnation, for the rich and ruling class of his days:

Woe to those who devise wickedness
and work evil upon their beds!
When the morning dawns, they perform it,
because it is in the power of their hand.
They covet fields, and seize them;
and houses, and take them away;
they oppress [defraud] a man and his home,
a man and his inheritance.

Nathan's parable of the rich man who had very many flocks and herds, and who took his poor neighbour's only lamb to have it prepared for a wayfarer who had come to him (2 Sm 12:1-6), vividly illustrates the type of exploitation of the weak mentioned in v. 2b, and the type of punishment the rich was due, according to king David's angry words (though here he himself is the transgressor):

Than David's anger was greatly kindled against the man;
and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has
done this deserves to die; and he shall restore the lamb
fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no
pity" (vv. 5-6).

Like David's, God's wrath was also often kindled against Judah and her kings for their negligence in vindicating the oppressed, the robbed, the spoiled, as illustrated in Jeremiah's words to king Zedekiah (Jr 21:12):

O house of David! Thus says the Lord:
 "Execute justice (*mišpāt*) in the morning,
 and deliver from the hand of the oppressor (*'ôšēq*)
 him who has been robbed (*gʒl*)
 lest my wrath (*ḥēmâ*) go forth like fire,
 and burn with none to quench it,
 because of your evil doings."

This text helps us again to clearly see how the oppression of the poor is reckoned by Yahweh in the faith of the Old Testament; how his fury, his anger is associated with the sin of social injustice; and what the practice of justice he requires is all about: to deliver the *gāzûl*, the weak "spoiled, robbed," from the hand of the *'ôšēq*, the mighty, the rich "oppressor." All of this serves to put Job 24:2 in perspective.

As described in v. 3, the wicked goes on to practice the height of injustice: the appropriation of the belongings of the orphan and the widow, symbols of the weakest and most unprotected members of society. It is worth noting that it is by denying having taken somebody's ox or ass (thus not oppressing or defrauding anyone, though standing in a privileged position of leadership among the people) that Moses (Nu 16:15) and Samuel (1 Sm 12:3) affirm their integrity before the Lord. If taking somebody's ox or ass is reputed serious, even more serious would be to drive away (*ynhgw*), like those who drive booty away, the ass of the fatherless, or to take the widow's ox as a pledge (then a double sin). The Code of Hammurabi (par. 241) imposes a fine on a man who takes somebody's ox as payment of a monetary claim: *šum-ma a-wi-lum alpam a-na ni-pu-tim it-te-pe 1/3 MA.NA kas-pam i-ša-qal*, "If a man has distrained an ox as a pledge, he shall pay one third of a mina of silver." The Israelite law code

determined that a widow's garment could not be taken in pledge (Dt. 24:17), and even if ever a garment of a poor man were taken in pledge it should have to be returned to him before the sun went down (Ex 22:26). It would have been even harsher and crueler to deprive the widow of her ox, as well as the orphan of his ass, since they would be spoiled of their essential means of livelihood. Such animals represented the basic means of survival for the defenceless in society. To take them in pledge would be as serious as taking a mill or a millstone in pledge (which is also forbidden in the Israelite law code), for he who would do this "would be taking life in pledge" (Dt 24:6). Those who spoil the widow and the fatherless are bound to be punished by Yahweh, the mighty Judge who executes justice for them (Dt 10:18; cf. Is 1:17, 23).

Verse 9 continues the description of the evil deeds (injustices) of the wicked (rich oppressor) at this point, putting in parallel the orphan that is still a suckling and "the infant of the poor" (reading *'ul* for *'al*); see Textual Note 9.b). The author makes the images deliberately strong and resorts to repetition for greater emphasis. Again we see the use of the verb *gāzal* (proper for describing the misdeeds of the wicked oppressor): "they *snatch* the orphan from the breast, and take the infant of the poor as a pledge." The heartlessness of the rich creditor is made evident not only by the fact that they take children as if they were chattels that could be held in pledge, but even more by the use of the verb *gāzal*, implying that they could be cheating and using force, as when they "snatch away (or steal)" flocks (v. 2b). From their helpless victims, the wicked take the land, the animals, and even their last possession: their own children. The fatherless infant is snatched from his mother's breast, perhaps as a pledge for his deceased father's debts (cf. Dt 24:7), to be raised as a slave. By cheating the widow and the poor, by cruelly

oppressing them, the wicked increase their wealth and recruit their labour force.

The contents of v. 21 ("They feed on the barren childless woman, and do no good to the widow") seem to suit better after v. 9 than in its actual position (see section 3). It draws on the profile of the wicked as well, depicting them as exploiters of poor, distressed, and defenceless women, here represented by the barren, childless woman (already humiliated by her condition) and the widow. If it is wrong to exploit and oppress any of one's neighbour, to oppress a woman is still worse, and even more unjust it is to oppress such defenceless and afflicted women. The verb *r'h*, already occurring in v. 2 regarding the flocks that the wicked steal and pasture for their own profit, is here used in the sense of "feed on" (a barren woman)⁵⁰ to show the extreme extent of the exploitation perpetrated by the wicked rich. An extraordinarily emotional expressiveness is achieved by the author. As Habel properly points out,

The image of "feeding on" a woman who is "barren" to extract the last ounce of life from her is another example of the poet's brilliant combination of incongruous elements to paint a vivid scene.⁵¹

Verse 4 makes a perfect transition between the preceding verses and those which follow, both in contents and description. Living under the exploitation and oppression of the wicked, the weak and poor eventually lose everything they own, and then become part of the *'ebyônîm*, the mass of miserably poor, destitute of home, here mentioned in parallel with the *'aniyyē-āres*, "the poor (or afflicted) of the land." Forced to this condition, they beg in the roads, perhaps seeking for restoration of what has been plundered from them. Still

merciless, and furthermore disturbed by the sight and annoying pleas of the poor, the wicked violently thrust them out of the road, as they have already been doing concerning the other rights of their victims. The context makes it clear that a concrete sense ("way, road") is to be found in this verse, but a double meaning ("way, road"/"right, portion") fits here as well (cp. Am 2:7, which, according to Pope, should be rendered "and turn aside the afflicted from the way," in the light of Job 24:4).

The wicked is shown to respond with more than indifference to the cry of the poor: they violently get rid of them, forcing them to leave the mainstream of society and seek together new quarters in the hidden corners of their community, where they will try to eke out a meagre existence. This situation reminds us of the modern social phenomenon of the formation of slums or shantytowns at the edge of big cities in Latin America, occasioned mostly by a constant rural exodus. The oppressed and exploited mass of poor peasants is forced or compelled to leave the country and seek refuge in the anonymity of the big cities. Unsited for urban jobs, they only exchange one type of misery for another. Many times they manage to survive by working and feeding themselves on the waste of a more affluent society. Even if a job is found, they invariably have to face the problems of malnutrition and disease, due to the low wages they receive and the poor working conditions they are offered.

The wicked rich is reckoned to be the cause of all the misery of the poor, and seemingly the cause of poverty itself in many cases, through oppression and exploitation. The sages depict them as sinners of "haughty eyes and a proud heart" (Pr 21:4), and are convinced that their violence and mercilessness (as shown in Job 24) will turn back to them:

The soul of the wicked desires evil;

his neighbour finds no mercy in his eyes.
(Pr 21:10)

He who closes his ear to the cry of the poor
will himself cry out and not be heard. (Pr 21:13)

The violence of the wicked will sweep them away,
because they refuse to act with justice. (Pr 21:17)

This traditional doctrine of immediate and relational Divine retribution entertained by the wise in Israel is even more clearly formulated in the following verses (Pr 22:16, 22-23), in regard to those who oppress the poor:

He who oppress the poor to increase his own wealth,
and he who give gifts to the rich, will come to poverty.

Do not exploit the poor because he is poor,
or crush the afflicted at the gate;
For the Lord will plead their cause
and despoil those who despoil them

This was the major problem between Job and his friends, for Job's misfortunes vividly resembled the Lord's punishment upon the wicked, as traditionally believed. In his previous speech, Eliphaz had envisaged Job's former life in such terms that, for the friends, he should have been identified with the wicked of 24:1-12 (we have already pointed out the closeness of both passages), rather than with their suffering victims:

Is not your wickedness great?
There is no end to your iniquities.
For you have exacted pledges of your brothers for nothing,
and stripped the naked of their clothing.
You have given no water to the weary to drink,
and you have withheld bread from the hungry.
The man with power possessed the land,
and the favoured man dwelt in it.
You have sent widows away empty,
and the arms of the fatherless were crushed.
Therefore snares are round about you,
and sudden terrors overwhelms you.
(Job 22:5-10)

At times Eliphaz derives his accusations of Job's guilt from the very language and speech of Job. But here there is no "evidence" on which his charges are based other than Job's (believed) severe judgment and his manifested arrogance. By resorting to a pernicious reasoning, Eliphaz axiomatically deduces the *causes* from what he believes to be the *effects*. It was clear for him that Job was now reaping what he had sowed. Therefore, even lacking the support of witnesses and concrete evidence he shows himself confident enough to accuse Job by simply devising a short catalogue of the inhuman social crimes which a man of Job's former rank and wealth might have committed.

Job would have no problem in agreeing with Eliphaz regarding his description of the deeds of the wicked, for this is what he effectively does in ch. 24, and likewise not without leaving a mark of his indignant disapproval. The point is that Job is not one of them. In ch. 29 (which we quote in page 121) Job remembers with fondness his former way of life, described in a totally opposite fashion to that presented by Eliphaz. But it is in ch. 31 that he offers an oath of clearance, swearing his innocence from such heinous crimes (vv. 16-17; 20-22; 38-40):

"If I have withheld anything that the poor desired,
 or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail,
 or have eaten my morsel alone,
 and the fatherless has not eaten of it;
 if I have seen any one perish for lack of clothing,
 or a poor man without covering;
 if his loins have not blessed me,
 and if he was not warmed with the fleece of my sheep;
 if I have raised my hand against the fatherless,
 because I saw help in the gate;
 then let my shoulder blade fall from my shoulder,
 and let my arm be broken from its socket.

 "If my land has cried out against me,
 and its furrows have wept together;
 if I have eaten its yield without payment,

and caused the death of its owners;
 let thorns grow instead of wheat,
 and foul weeds instead of barley."

An apparently similar type of declaration of innocence or protestation of guiltlessness is found in the chapter 127 of the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*.⁵² It consists of a long list of faults which the dead person denies to have committed. I shall quote a few of them (A, 1,9,11,15,16,22, 24,25,28), which refer to the same kind of social crimes we have been dealing with:

I have not committed evil against men.
 I have not done violence to the poor man.
 I have not defamed a slave to his superior.
 I have given no order to a killer.
 I have not caused any one suffering.
 I have neither increased or diminished the grain-measure.
 I have not cheated over land.
 I have not added to the weight of the balance.
 I have not driven cattle away from their pasture.⁵³

Whether these declarations are expression of an exalted ethic or simply part of a magic formula designed to allow the dead person to avoid the consequences of judgment (his/her heart is being weighed in scales before Osiris) is a debatable question. The truth could be somewhere in the middle, as suggested by Epzstein, who also observes that at any rate these declarations serve to show "what opinion was expected of an official or a landowner, and how he had to conduct himself to merit a good funeral and a happy life in the next world."⁵⁴

The same interpretive principle can be applied to the case of Job. However, the frame of reference of Job's case is significantly diverse. He declares his innocence not to avoid the consequences of Divine judgment (he is already suffering the scourges inflicted by God and is therefore being accused as guilty by his friends), but on the contrary he longs for judgment in the

assurance that he is going to be acquitted. All he wants is justice, and not as a dead person but as someone still among the living. His declarations are intended to press God to show himself so that he can be vindicated.

Gibson schematically sums up the accusations of Eliphaz in 22:6-9 and connects them with their corresponding bits in Job's oath of clearance in ch. 31, as can be seen in the lines which I find convenient to reproduce below:

verse 6, exploitation of the destitute; compare 31:19-20
and Deuteronomy 24:12-13
verse 7, inhumanity towards the needy; compare 31:16-17
and Isaiah 58:7
verse 8, misappropriation of another's land; compare
31:38-40
and 1 Kings 21
verse 9, disregard of the defenceless; compare 31:16-17,21
and Deuteronomy 14:29.⁵⁵

It is noteworthy that Eliphaz describes all of Job's alleged past sins on social and humanitarian grounds, and epitomizes them under the category of "great wickedness" (22:5), a judgment which is obviously shared by the other friends, Job himself (though protesting his innocence), and the whole of the Old Testament tradition. They all know how serious the consequences can be when the oppressed cry out to God. It has become evident that one's wickedness is viewed by the sages, and elsewhere in the Old Testament, less often than generally thought as a spiritual issue, and more often in connection with social injustice. And it is fundamentally in connection with this type of sin (injustice, involving negligence or oppression toward the poor) that the concept of Divine retribution is developed in the Old Testament.

2.3.2. The Suffering of the Poor Oppressed

When the actions of the wicked are described, the fate of their victims, the poor, the orphan, the widow, is also presented like the reverse of a coin, as

we can notice in the previous section dealing with vv. 2-4, 9, 21. Now in vv. 5-8, 10-12b (v. 4b serving as transition) the attention of the author is focused on the poor and afflicted themselves, in their actions, in their plight as victims of oppression, though the image of the wicked who caused them to live in misery and still oppress them is still clearly devised.

Deprived of their rights, possessions, and dignity, the wretched make the desert or steppe their home, where they struggle to survive along with the children they breed in such miserable conditions. If the usual rendering of the MT is correct, they are here (v. 5) compared with the "wild asses", *p^orā'im*, the main features of which are described in God's answer to Job, in 39:5-8:

"Who has let the wild ass go free?
 who has loosed the bonds of the swift ass?
 to whom I have given the wilderness for his home,
 and the barren land for his dwelling place?
 He scorns the turmoil of the city;
 he hears not the shouts of the driver (*nôgēs*),
 He ranges the mountains as his pasture,
 and he searches after every green thing."

Like wild asses which roam the desert for their food, so those landless poor have to wander about eagerly searching for their daily sustenance. Furthermore, alienated and dehumanized (a fact which has been already rhetorically made evident by their being compared with wild animals), the tumult of the city has no meaning for them, except for stirring the bitter remembrance of the *nôgēs* (39:7), the "driver" or "taskmaster, oppressor, tyrant," from whom many of them ironically got relative freedom seeking refuge in an inhospitable land, where they bear a life of complete destitution.

Their toil is either to roam the desert in search for food and/or work for others at the edge of the arable and cultivated land, in a "field not their own," (reading *b^olî lô* for MT *b^olîlô*, "his fodder," cp. Textual Note 6.b), perhaps serving

as forced labourers. They fall again prey of the wicked, *rāšā'*, presumably the wealthy owners of the vineyards where they've gone to work, and by whom they are harshly oppressed. As already indicated in vv. 2-4, the wicked is the man who appropriates the land and goods of others, the oppressor of the poor, the man who has become rich and increases his wealth with ill-gotten gains.

It doesn't seem proper to talk about "the life of . . . crime to which they [the poor] are driven"⁵⁶ in regard to verse 6. As Dhorme has correctly pointed out,

We see no reason at all to find in this verse a description of the marauding in which these unfortunate folk are supposed to have indulged for the satisfaction of their hunger (contra Renan, Dillmann, Duhm, etc.). It is simply forced labour, and specifically night work following on work in the daytime (v. 5).⁵⁷

Dhorme's particular reference to "night work" is doubtful (cp. Textual Note 6.b), but in broad terms his statement is correct. Verse 6 is better understood in the light of vv. 10-11. The text marks a sharp contrast between the rich/wicked and the poor/innocent, to expose the injustice of the former, and any reference to the "crimes" of the latter is totally irrelevant for the context. If it is in fact to be interpreted that the poor are getting their scarce food from other people's field, from the vineyard of the wicked, they are not supposed to be stealing, but acting as late gatherers (*lqyš*), after the harvest, to collect the gleanings of the vineyard due to the poor. In any case the wicked is not shown as fully complying with the duty of leaving a substantial part of his crop for the poor, the sojourner, the orphan, and the widow to glean, as legally prescribed in Lv 19:10 and Dt 24:22. As a matter of fact, the need for commending such a humanitarian spirit was also recognized outside Israel. In

the *Teaching of Amenemope*, the ancient Egyptian Wisdom text which we have already referred to, the widow is not to be bothered in the fields, and the poor is to be properly assisted, as we can see in the lines quoted below (XXVIII: 1-6):

Do not *recognize* a widow if thou catchest her in the fields,
Nor fail to be *indulgent* to her reply.
Do not neglect a stranger (with) thy oil-jar,
That it may be doubled before thy brethren.
God desires respect for the poor,
More than the honoring of the exalted.⁵⁸

The destitution of the poor has already been indicated by the fact that they have no right over the land they work. Verse 7 manifests it even further by saying that they lie all night naked for lack of clothes, having to suffer the cold. There could be here an allusion to the biblical injunction to restore a poor man's pledged garment before the setting of the sun (Ex 22:26-27). Far from being a law abiding person, the wicked is characterized (like Job was by Eliphaz) as the one who exacts pledges of his brothers for nothing and strips men of their clothing, leaving them naked (Job 22:6). Job in his turn swears that he has not let any one perish for lack of clothing, or a poor man without covering, but that rather the loins of the latter have blessed him, for he was warmed with the fleece of Job's sheep (31:19-20). It is perhaps good to recall that although the rigours of the winter as usually seen in the northern countries are not known in highland Palestine and Transjordan, nonetheless the extremes of cold and heat between day and night (especially in the steppes and deserts), and between summer and winter (the temperature varying between about 7 and 38 degrees Centigrade) is significant, and even more so in consequence of the harsh and unprotected conditions under which most of the population live.⁵⁹

Besides being exposed to the cold at night, without a blanket or garment, the wretched poor is described as having no shelter to protect them from the rainstorms which lash the mountains in the winter (cp. Is 28:2; 30:30 and 4:6; 25:4; 32:2 which speak of shelter, *mhsh*, from the rain, *zrm*). Shelterless, they are caught by violent, heavy showers (*zerem*), and soaked they desperately cling to the rocks for protection. This very expressive and touching picture could be involving an ironic allusion to the traditional belief that Yahweh is a *mahseh mizzerem*, a "shelter from the storm" (Is 25:4), a *šûr*, a "rock" of refuge for those in trouble (Is 17:10; Dt 32:15; Ps 31:3[2]; 62:8[7]).

Whereas v. 7 refers to nakedness during the night for lacking of covering, v. 10 speaks of nakedness during the day, as the poor go about in their work, clad only in a loin-cloth, like a slave. Tur-Sinai has the suggestive emendation, "Those spin naked without clothing," which unfortunately is based on a doubtful Aramaic translation theory (cp. Textual Note 10a). At any rate it is my opinion that v. 10 is not to be taken as tautologous to v. 7.

The extreme state of deprivation of the poor is made evident by their description as landless (perhaps even slaves), shelterless (exposed to the rigours of the weather), and lacking food and clothes. Their oppression and misery is made to look even harsher when they are said to go hungry though carrying the sheaves (v. 10b), and go thirsty though treading winepresses (v. 11). By the way, Dhorme's comment on this is very appropriate:

It is a torture of Tantalus to have to carry sheaves when one suffers from hunger, or to have to crush the grape when one suffers from thirst. The rich man piles high his stocks in his granaries and fills his cellars, while his slave dies of hunger and thirst.⁶⁰

Whether we take the poor as slaves or ill-paid, hard-worked, weary labourers

(cp 7:2; 14:6), the fact is that although working with food all around them (grain, olives, grapes), their well-fed landlords do not allow them to still their pangs of hunger and thirst with any grains from the sheaves they carry all day long, or the juice of the grapes they tread out. They are made less than donkeys, which are fed at their master's manger (Is 1:3). Undoubtedly such injustice on the part of the rich/wicked would have been understood as clear violation of the spirit of the law, expressed in these ordinances:

You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.
(Dt 25:4)

When you go to your neighbour's vineyard, you may eat you fill of grapes, as many as you wish, but you shall not put any in your vessel. When you go into your neighbour's standing grain, you may pluck the ears with your hand, but you shall not put a sickle to your neighbour's standing grain. (Dt 23:25f[24f]).

After considering the downtrodden in the steppe (vv. 5-8), the description moves to the cultivated countryside (vv. 10-11), and now (v. 12) it could be focusing the human suffering in the towns ('îr), where the mortally wounded groan and cry for help. But since "the poet does not develop a theme of oppression in the city as a counterpart to his extensive picture of the oppression of the poor in the country,"⁶¹ and men can be wounded and die everywhere, *mē'îr* should perhaps be rendered "from out of anguish" (cp. Textual Note 12.a). No matter where this takes place, it is very likely that the reference here is to the same oppressed mentioned before, at least to those of the two preceding verses. If this is so, with the LXX we could perhaps replace *hllym*, "wounded," by *'llym*, "children," and render

From out of anguish men groan,
and the soul (throat) of the children cry out for help.

This translation in fact simply requires a slight emendation (the change of

one guttural consonant for another), and has the advantage of providing a perfect sequence and conclusion for the theme of the plight of the oppressed. However, whether we read here men//children, or the dying//the wounded, at any rate we are dealing with the victims of violence and oppression, the victims of the rich/wicked. The emphasis now is on the fact that the wretched poor raise their "cry" out of their miserable plight, and this is done through the use of *nā'aq*, "to groan," and *šāwa'*, "to cry (for help)," which we have already looked at in our study of the cry of the oppressed Israelites in Egypt. The verb *šāwa'* occurs in several other places in the Book of Job (19:7; 30:20, 24, 28; 29:12; 35:9; 36:13; 38:41) and its derivative noun *šū^a'* is found once in 36:19. The verb *zā'aq*, "to cry out," occurs in parallelism with *šāwa'* in 35:9, and its correspondent noun, *z^o'āqâ*, is found in 16:18. Also the verb *ṣā'aq*, "to cry out," occurs in 19:7, in parallelism with *šāwa'*, and 35:12; likewise its correspondent noun, *ṣ^o'āqâ*, is employed twice (27:9; 34:28). These terms belong to the vocabulary of lament, and have been also used in the description of the oppression of the Israelites in Egypt. In the Book of Job they are mostly used in reference to Job himself, and are most often found in Job's speeches. The abundant use of these terms in Job ascribes to the book the character of a book of lament, where the cry of poor and afflicted is raised to God.

Elihu sums up the reasons why people cry with these words (39:9):

Because of the multitude of oppressions people cry out;
they call for help because of the arm of the mighty.

Not departing from the basic concept of our text (24:1-12), he pinpoints the oppression on the part of the mighty, the rich/wicked, as the cause for the cry of the poor (*dal*) and afflicted (*'^aniyyim*), by reason of which they are

punished by God (34:26-28):

He strikes them for their wickedness,
in the sight of men,
because they turned aside from following him,
and had no regard for any of his ways,
so as to cause the cry of the poor to come to him,
for he hears the cry of the afflicted.

2.4. GOD'S FRUSTRATING DELAY

In the Scripture we have just quoted above God is described as the one who hears the cry of the poor (weak and afflicted). Even irrational creatures are said to partake of his compassion when they cry to him and wander about for lack of food (38:41). Eliphaz states with confidence that

[God] saves the fatherless from their mouth,
the needy ('*ebyôn*) from the hand of the mighty (*ḥāzāq*),
So the weak (*dal*) have hope,
and injustice shuts her mouth. (5:15, 16)

Job claims to have possessed the same spirit of justice and compassion. He ascribes his former prosperity and success to his just living, which is to say, his living in conformity to God's just character (29:12-18):

because I delivered the poor who cried,
and the fatherless who had none to help him.
The blessing of him who was about to perish came upon me,
and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.
I put on righteousness, and it clothed me;
my justice was like a robe and a turban.
I was eyes to the blind,
and feet to the lame.
I was a father to the poor,
and I searched out the cause of him whom I did not know.
I broke the fangs of the unrighteous,
and made him drop his prey from his teeth.
Then I thought, 'I shall die in my nest,
and I shall multiply my days as the sand,
my roots spread out to the waters,
with the dew all night on my branches,
my glory fresh with me,
and my bow ever new in my hand.'

This soliloquy in which Job describes his former way of life is in fact an appeal to God to break his silence. But at the same time it is undeniably invaluable for the ideal of Hebrew morality it sets forth, in terms of the social duties and responsibilities which a man of rank in those times was expected to comply with. Job depicts the life of harmony of an ancient small Hebrew community where justice is practiced, the widow and the poor are defended and assisted, and the oppressors are repelled and punished. And of course he is the protagonist, the one around whom all the action takes place. The allusion to acts of justice in behalf of the poor and weak members of the community as an expression its life of order, peace, and harmony is also found elsewhere in the literature of the ancient Near East. A similar type of picture is suggested in the Ugaritic legend of Aqhat, regarding the acts of justice of Daniel (or Daniel), a patriarch type ruler, father of the young hero who gives his name to the ancient legend. The following verses (17 V 4-8 = 19 I 19-25) occur twice in the story:

Thereupon Daniel, man of Rapi,
thereat the hero, man of *Hrnm*,
raised himself up (and) sat at the entrance of the gate
beneath the trees which were by the threshing-floor;
he judged the cause of the widow,
he tried the case of the fatherless.⁶²

Though having lived a just and respectful life in the past, according to the canons of morality of his times, Job is now facing "disaster, ruin" (*pîd*, 30:24; 31:29), and "calamity" (*hawwâ*, 30:13; 6:2, 30); filled with "disgrace, shame" (*qālôn*, 10:15) and "affliction, humiliation" (*'ônî*, 10:15; 30:27; 36:8, 15, 21); seized by "anguish, distress" (*šar*, *šārâ*, 5:19; 7:11; 15:24; 27:9; 38:23; 36:19) and "trouble, sorrow" (*'āmāl*, *'āwen*, 5:6). He has now passed to the side of those who are caused to raise their cry (30:24-28):

Yet does not one in a heap of ruins stretch out his hand,
 and in his disaster cry for help?
 Did not I weep for him whose day was hard?
 Was not my soul grieved for the poor?
 But when I looked for good, evil came.
 My heart is in turmoil, and is never still;
 days of affliction come to meet me.
 I go about blackened, but not by the sun;
 I stand up in the assembly, and cry for help.

Job's trouble is that having practiced justice, he reaped affliction, a paradoxical fact, contrary to all the annals of Hebrew history and doctrinal tradition, and which he obviously cannot accept. Besides, he finds reason for being impatient and bewildered, for although crying as anyone else innocent found in trouble would do, he is not heard, his fate is not immediately vindicated by God, as he and his contemporaries would have expected. God's delay causes him frustration and perplexity, which can be observed in these words:

Behold, I cry out, 'Violence!' but I am not answered;
 I cry aloud, but there is no justice (*mišpāt*). (19:7)

I cry to you, but you do not answer me;
 I stand up, but you do not⁶³ heed me. (30:20)

Under the pressure of a very uncomfortable situation, Job questions God's justice and affirms his own (27:5-6), a fact that looks very odd in the sight of his friends (and ours as well). Job's cry is seen in the Elihu speech (by many scholars considered intrusive) as an empty cry, like the cry of the wicked, the godless, when stricken by God (36:19; 27:9; 35:12), although Elihu sustains in 36:13 the apparent contradiction that the godless in heart do not cry when bound by God.

One has to concede that Job in fact does not seem totally discouraged when charging God with indifference, for he is sure that at some point in the

future his right shall be maintained. So his cry must not cease; even his blood, like that of Abel (Gn 4:10), should be allowed to perpetuate his cry (16:18-22):

O earth, cover not my blood,
and let my cry find no resting place.
Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven,
and he that vouches for me is on high.
My friends scorn me;
my eye pours out tears to God,
that he would maintain the right of a man with God,
like that of a man with his neighbour.
For when a few years have come
I shall go the way whence I shall not return.

Since Job cannot dispense with the idea of a God of justice,⁶⁴ he seemingly and paradoxically cries to God against God, to a God whom he calls his "umpire" (9:33), his "witness" (16:19), and his "redeemer" (19:25), against a God who treats him unjustly. If his vindication doesn't come in life, it will certainly take place after his death.

However, the cries of trust and confidence of Job's laments (also a prominent feature of the lamentation Psalms) do not prevent him from having his dark moments when, like in chapter 12, he accuses God of indifference (because of his delay), and even of being on the side of the wicked.

His resentment for not being answered leads him to observe how the cry of many likewise afflicted people in the world is apparently ignored by God: "But God does not give heed to their appeal" (24:12c). This line can also be rendered, "But God considers nothing wrong," reading *tiplâ* with MT. There seems to be here an interplay with 1:22 in the prologue, "In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong (*tiplâ*)."⁶⁵ Job cannot hide his disappointment with a God who seems to ignore the cry of the victims of violence and oppression, but in bitter irony he goes further and makes God responsible for

the mighty's success, as if he were no longer the protector of the weak, the poor, but rather the support of their exploiters and oppressors (24:22-23):

He prolongs the life of the mighty with his power,
they rise up when they should despair of life.
He gives them security, and they are supported;
and his eyes are upon their ways.

Such contemptuous feelings had already been openly revealed in ch. 9. God has been elusive, with no apparent intention of explaining why he is treating Job as guilty when he is innocent. In a mood of pessimism and irony he sees himself in such a deadlock situation that the only thing he can do is to beg for mercy from his accuser, the one who is wronging him. Though he is innocent, what does it matter in such a condition? In fact he could never plead his cause before the mighty God, who is always prone to show his power. Arguing from his own agonized experience, he blames God for arbitrariness not only in regard to his own plight, but also in regard to the situation of injustice predominant in the world around him (a widening of perspective which we have already observed in ch. 24). His pains and sorrows allied to his self-confessed condition of blamelessness serve to open his eyes to a new reality and confer upon him the necessary boldness to declare it. He is not the only innocent sufferer. The world is full of them, given the fact that (as Job sees it in his bad mood) God treats the blameless and the wicked alike, and even mocks when tragedy strikes down innocent men. If the world is delivered into the hands of the wicked and justice is perverted by those who are expected to uphold it, God is the one to be blamed (9:22-24):

"It is all one; therefore I say,
he destroys both the blameless and the wicked.
when disaster brings sudden death,
he mocks at the calamity of the innocent.
The earth is given into the hand of the wicked;
he covers the faces of its judges--

if it is not he, who then is it?"

It is in ch. 21 that, sarcastically shocking the representatives of the traditional Wisdom school, Job displays his most comprehensive and striking apology of the wicked's prosperity and impunity. In vv. 7-16 we have an eloquent description of the outward prosperity of the wicked which can be well appreciated in its marked contrast to the misery and suffering of the poor as portrayed in ch. 24, besides literally echoing other passages like Ps 1; 128; and Pr 3:13-18. They have been well summarized as follows:

The wicked do not fall under God's rod, but survive to old age with their families around them, their homes safe, their herds prolific, the sound of music and rejoicing everywhere, and they come to the grave in peace. Yet they do not acknowledge God or attend his Temple, but boast openly of having ignored him and got away with it.⁶⁵

Job contradicts Bildad's claim (18:5ff) that the light of the wicked is put out and that all kind of calamities overtake them. Still in a defiant mood, he rhetorically asks "how often" is this so? Even if their iniquities are not totally disregarded but stored up for the next generation, this cannot prove to be a good medicine. It is the wicked, the transgressors themselves, who have to taste it. Their iniquities should be turned upon their own heads. God's frustrating delay in bringing justice to the human scene is obviously in the forefront when the prosperous wicked, on the one hand, and the embittered innocent sufferer, on the other hand, are said to be levelled by death. The words the author puts in Job's mouth are noteworthy (21:17-20; 23-26):

"How often is it that the lamp of the wicked is put out?
that their calamity comes upon them?
that God distributes pains in his anger?
that they are like straw before the wind,
and like chaff that the storm carries away?

You say, 'God stores up their iniquity for their sons.'
 Let him recompense it to themselves, that they may know
 it.

Let their own eyes see their destruction,
 and let them drink of the wrath of the Almighty.

.....

One dies in full prosperity,
 being wholly at ease and secure,
 his body full of fat
 and the marrow of his bones moist.

Another dies in bitterness of soul,
 never having tasted of good.

They lie down alike in the dust,
 and the worms cover them."

In the third section of his devastating speech (21:27-34) Job appeals to the unbiased testimony of the wayfarers, of those who are used to the world's roads. They too, like those who have travelled the "way" established by God, would be able to ratify Job's assertions. They too can testify that the wicked, the powerful, rich rulers are spared in the day of calamity. Nobody dares to confront and accuse them, they die in peace, their bodies are borne to the grave by a host of followers amid great pomp and ceremony, and guards protect their tombs from grave robbers. They seem to enjoy life as much as they do death (their riches follow them to the tomb and remain under guard).

It has become clear through Job's arguments, especially in ch. 21, that the traditional doctrine of immediate reward and punishment cannot be sustained in the light of the facts of life. Much of the theological and ethical reasoning which upholds the edifice of Hebrew Wisdom has been shaken.

Even so, as we have already noted, in spite of all of his unrestrained outpouring of sarcasm and bitterness, Job had also his high moments of inspiration, his moments of outward faith and confidence, when he could call God his umpire, his witness, his redeemer. Underlying his whole experience is the assurance, sometimes restrained, sometimes clearly suggested, that

somehow, sometime, God's justice will ultimately prevail.

2.5. A FINAL REMARK

But the facts of life remain in defiance of the traditional doctrine. For some reason God can delay, and meanwhile the poor oppressed, the innocent sufferers die in the hope of liberation, whilst their oppressors seem to get away with it. Therefore Job shows confidence in asking (24:25):

If this is not so, who can prove me false?
who can make my speech worthless?

The author of the Book of Job has used the extreme anguish and annoyance of an inexplicably wronged, innocent, ancient patriarch-like character to carry out the difficult task of confronting the dogmatic expression of a traditional belief in Divine retribution with the observation of the harsh facts of life, in terms of the accumulation of injustice on the earth (the continuous suffering of the poor) and, conversely, the evident prosperity of the wicked, seen as the exploiter and oppressor of the poor.

As we have suggested, Job is confident that what he has just said conforms to what can be observed in life's experience, and so it cannot be denied or quibbled at by any reasonable person, no matter how inflexible his or her theological premises might be. As a matter of fact, he could even find allies in other lands. Babylonian sages had expressed the same kind of pessimism. In the *Babylonian Theodicy* (also known as *The Babylonian Job*, probably composed between 1400 and 1000 B.C.), an acrostic and alliterative poem of twenty-eight stanzas of eleven lines each, a sufferer complains of the injustice of both gods and men. Since the ancient Hebrews and Babylonians had no concept of recompense in a future life, rewards or punishments were expected to be meted out in this life. Lines 265-86, which we quote below,

resemble in several aspects Job 24:

SUFFERER

Pay attention, my friend, give ear to my counsel,
 heed the choice speech of my wisdom.
 Men prize the word of a strong man who is trained in
 murder,
 they bring down the powerless who has done no wrong.
 Men testify for the wicked to whom crime is righteousness;
 they drive out the honest man who heeds the will of God.
 Men fill the store house of the oppressor with gold,
 they plunder the income of him whose sustenance is
 scanty.
 Men support the powerful whose . . . is crime;
 they destroy and drive away the weak in his poverty.
 As for me, the penurious, a *nouveau riche* is persecuting me.

FRIEND

Narru, king of the gods, who created mankind,
 and majestic Zulummar, who dug out their clay,
 And mistress Mami, the queen who fashioned them,
 gave perverse speech to the human race;
 with lies, and not truth, they endowed them for ever.
 Solemnly they speak in favour of a rich man;
 'He is a king,' they say, 'riches go at his side.'
 But they harm the poor as though he were a thief;
 they lavish slander upon him and plot his murder,
 Making him suffer every evil like a criminal,
 because he has no protection.
 Terrifyingly they bring him to his end,
 and extinguish him like a flame.

Even the sufferer's friend in the Babylonian Theodicy makes concessions in his reasoning. However, this is not the case with Job's friends. They would rather prefer to rewrite his life than to revise their theological script, as Davidson would correctly put it.⁶⁷ He explains:

Where doctrine and history, either communal or personal, clash, an attempt may be made to resolve the tension in one of two ways: either by rewriting the history in such a way that it conforms more closely to what doctrine demands or by taking a long, hard look at doctrine, being prepared to rethink it in the light of experience.⁶⁸

CONCLUSIONS

The centrality of the theme of justice, seen in regard to men's moral attitude toward the poor, the weak, the oppressed is clearly seen not only in ch. 24 but throughout the whole book of Job. It is the basis for Divine reward and punishment. It is also the basis for one to judge a man's integrity and righteousness, and, of course, his entitlement to rightfully occupy a ruling position among his own people. It is no wonder that rulers throughout the ancient Near East were often keen to have their names proclaimed as champions of justice. This would certainly sound like a public acclamation of their supposed royal dignity, but quite obviously it could serve to prevent people from raising doubts regarding their suitability for the throne. It was on the basis of king Keret's negligence in complying with his basic duty of administering justice to the powerless, the underprivileged classes in the ancient city of Ugarit (since apparently he was still recovering from a time of serious illness), that Yaššib, his son, accused him of being unfit for the throne, with the declared intention of replacing him (Keret II:43-54):

"While bandits raid you turn (your) back,
and you entertain feuding rivals.
You have been brought down by your failing power.
You do not judge the cause of the widow,
You do not try the case of the wretched.
You do not drive away those who prey on the poor,
You do not feed the orphan before your presence,
(nor) the widow behind your back.
.....
Come down from the (throne of your) kingdom (that) I may be
king,
from (the seat of) your dominion (that) I may sit on it."⁶⁹

It is altogether meaningful that the Lord finally appeared to Job in a whirlwind and out of his majesty spoke to him (chapters 38-41). Job then was humbled before God's holiness, magnificence, wisdom, and power, and was condemned for his ignorance and *hubris*. Nevertheless, that notorious

encounter was also his victory. He was not condemned for his claim of innocence and request for vindication. On the contrary, his integrity and human dignity were established; he was freed from his obsession with his own righteousness, and from his burden of sadness, frustration, and resentment; and his situation of misery was completely transformed, as made explicit in the second prose section. That was, above all, the encounter with his *gō'ēl*, his redeemer, his deliverer, the kinsman of the poor, the sufferer, the oppressed, which he had dreamed of and longed for. His faith which led him to insistently knock at heaven's door was finally victorious, and his hope generously recompensed. As for his friends, the defenders of God and the traditional "piety," God's verdict was not so pleasing (47:7):

"My wrath is kindled against you [Eliphaz] and against your two friends; for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has." (42:7)

The question of Job's guilty or innocence occupies the centre of his long and hot debate with his friends. In this respect it can be said that, over and above Job's physical, social, and moral calamity, he was also suffering under fierce theological oppression, occasioned by his friends' doctrinal tyranny, to which they were totally committed. Nothing seems to be worse than the equivocating dogmatic application of a good theology, especially when covered by the mantle of piety and traditional orthodoxy. Like Job, Jesus had also his doctrinal debates with the Pharisees of his time. His famous axiomatic declaration regarding the observance of the Sabbath is still the best answer to all kinds of theological tyranny, to all blind doctrinal dogmatisms: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mk 2:27). The question raised by Jesus' disciples, namely, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or

his parents, that he was born blind?" (Jo 9:2), serves to illustrate the fact that the theology of Job's friends is long lasting and pervasive. As long as people show the same kind of attitude, like those pious circles within the large Christian middle class of our capitalistic society who so easily associate faith with prosperity, suffering with sin, and poverty with laziness and unbelief, the book of Job will remain timely, due to the decisive and permanent challenge posed by its message.

The question of God's delay in bringing in justice, and the frustrations and social disorder that take place in the human realm in the meantime, is a fact that has been well established in Job's arguments. Experience shows that the Liberator God has not always been swift in bringing deliverance, and the earth actually seems to be in the hands of the wicked oppressors. And this is a real frustration for the poor, the oppressed sufferers, the downtrodden who cry out to God in hope of liberation. "Why does injustice prevail? Why do you not come, o Lord? What is detaining you?" they might ask sometimes. Job's extraordinary encounter with his redeemer, his Liberator God, seems to bring the answer to these embarrassing questions. In chs. 40:15-41:26 [41:34] the problem of the presence of evil in creation is raised in connection with the mythical entities referred to as Behemoth and Leviathan, the symbols of the primeval forces of chaos, which were overcome by Horus in the Egyptian mythology, by Marduk in the Babylonian Enuma Elish, and by Baal in the Canaanite mythological tradition. It seems proper to see them in Job as symbols of those chaotic and threatening forces created by God in the beginning which need to be kept under control. In other words, they represent the forces of evil and injustice which cause havoc in history and in the whole of the created order, and which Yahweh permanently strives to subdue. It follows that God's delay is not because he is a malicious, or an

arbitrary, or an indifferent, or a forgetful God, but because he is engaged in a fierce struggle against those mighty forces which menace the balance and stability of his whole creation. There are obviously many other tragedies demanding God's attention in addition to Job's. He wants his suffering people to cry out to him, and he is willing to grant them justice (and he will eventually do so), but at times there are hindrances on the way (the experience of Daniel as described in Dn 10:12, 13 might be a good illustration at this point). His people is challenged, as Job was, to join in the battle for justice till the great day when all injustice will be finally and completely uprooted from the earth with the advent of God's kingdom. But in the meantime the battle goes on, and quick success in righting the world's wrongs is not to be expected. Liberation from injustice does not come easily. It is normally preceded by blood, sweat, and tears. This is the challenge of the cross which is posed before those who join in the struggle for justice.

However, the situation is not so desperate. As the very case of Job exemplifies, sometimes deliverance could be closer than one suspects. Sometimes quick (though partial) successes do occur. In some way, every act of justice, of deliverance, whether big or small, in the life of a person, a group, or a nation, is a sign of God's presence and mercy. But since the accumulation of injustice in the earth is an indisputable fact, and since God's justice cannot fail, a universal day of reckoning at some point in History can be assumed and is due to take place. A new order in which justice prevails has to result at the end of the battle. Job was sure that his vindication had to happen, even if it were to occur after his death.

In other words, when the traditional, historically rooted belief concerning the trinomial salvific formula, "oppression-cry-Divine liberation," is confronted

with the harsh facts of life, i.e., with God's silence or apparent indifference to human injustice, faith in the inviolability of God's justice generates hope for the future, in the assurance that sooner or later, whether in one's lifetime or sometime in history, God is bound by his own nature and character to give a proper answer to injustice as he hears the cry of the oppressed. And such intervention, on the basis of the biblical records, is always believed to be marked by a theophany. Job had his; the world today still looks for its.

CHAPTER 3
THE CRY OF THE POOR AND OPPRESSED
IN THE LAMENT PSALMS

Having considered the cry of the Israelites in Egypt, the echo of that cry in their historical records and law codes, and how the cry of the innocent sufferer, the poor, and oppressed is given expression in a radical wisdom work like the Book of Job, we now turn to the cry in its well structured form as known in the israelite cultic tradition, i.e., the genre of prayers for deliverance in poetic form which have conventionally been called Lament Psalms, although, strictly speaking, the lament is only one component part of these psalms.

Since some sort of deliverance is always sought in them by the petitioner, is always the aim of the cultic act which they imply, perhaps they could be more appropriately labelled "Psalms for Deliverance". Generally speaking, a psalm of lament is in its entirety a "cry for liberation", a petition addressed to God by an individual or the community, when subject to some kind of oppression, when their life and well-being are threatened by antagonistic forces or entities. Nevertheless, the Old Testament concepts of cry and lament are closely associated, and are often interchangeable. Expressed in any size or form, the cry or lament is always a type of prayer, is always a plea for God's justice, based on his covenantal fidelity.

Resting in the salvific nature of Yahweh, who is plentifully attested in the Israelite historical and legal traditions as the deliverer of the weak and the oppressed, the God to whom the community of Israel is bound--a relationship

on which depended its political stability and social equilibrium--those who were afflicted from among the people, especially in cases of social injustice, usually involving questions of life and death, could express their cry or lament before God in the temple or in a local shrine (certainly assisted by cultic officials), perhaps, in a number of cases, as a last court of appeal, utilizing prayers moulded within the conventional parameters set by the genre.

The relatively great number of the extant psalms of lament of the individual seems to stress three important features of the ancient Israelite socio-religious life:

a) The frequency of the struggles and conflicts which emerged between the members of the community, particularly the plight of the poor and the weak who so often fell prey into the hands of the powerful rich (a state of affairs very much reminiscent of that of the Eighth Century B.C.);

b) the vulnerability of the Israelite juridical system, very often represented by corrupt officials addicted to bribery, who by the miscarriage of justice transformed the system into an instrument of oppression of the poor; and

c) conversely the positive nature of the social function of the temple and the local shrines at the time when those psalms first came into existence, and even subsequently when they were still used within the parameters of their original setting, by providing the legal and spiritual means whereby the suffering and oppressed members of the community could find help, protection, and justice through some form of liberation.

Psalm 17, which I have chosen for a detailed study, is a typical lament psalm of the individual, in which the liberation motif, as usual, is put forward as its central theme. As we consider such a motif under different angles,

most of which are already suggested by the elements and structure of the poem, other psalms of lament will be taken into account. As usual, this will follow the presentation of the text in my own translation and an extensive section dealing with detailed textual notes and other exegetical observations as appropriate.

3.1. PSALM 17: A PLEA FOR JUSTICE

3.1.1. The Text of Ps 17 in Translation

A Prayer of David

1. Hear, O Yahweh, my plea for justice;^a
listen to my cry!
Give ear to my prayer,
not (uttered) with^b deceitful lips.
2. Let my deliverance come^a from your presence,
let your eyes^b see what is right.^c
3. May you test^a my heart, may you visit^a (me) at night,^b
may you try^a me, but you will find nothing:
I have determined^c my mouth shall not transgress.
4. As for^a the deeds of men, by the words of your lips
I have avoided the paths of the violent.^b
5. My steps have held fast^a to your tracks;
My feet have not been shaken.
6. I call upon you, O God, for^a you shall answer me!
Incline your ear to me, hear^b my words!
7. Wondrously display your steadfast love,^a
O Deliverer of those who seek refuge (in you)^b
from those who rise up against your right hand!^c
8. Keep me as the apple of (your) eye;^a
hide me in the shadow of your wings,
9. from the fury^a of the wicked who have assailed me,
my enemies who greedily^b surround me.
10. They are clogged^a with the arrogance of their heart,^b
with their mouth^c they speak proudly.
11. They have tracked me^a down, now they surround me;^b
They set their eyes to cast (me)^c to the ground.
12. Each one is^a like a lion which is eager to tear,
and like a young lion crouching in ambush.^b
13. Arise, O Yahweh, confront him,^a cast him^a down;
deliver my life from the wicked by your sword;^b
14. slay them^a by your hand, O Yahweh,
slay them^a from the world,^b make them perish from among
the living;^c
may their belly be filled^d with what you have stored up
(for them);^e
may their children have plenty (of it),
and leave something over to their babes.
15. As for me, in justice, I shall behold^a your face;
on awakening, I shall be satisfied with your form.^b

3.1.2. Textual and Explanatory Notes

1.a Forming a rather strange construction, MT has *ṣēdeq* as direct object of *šim'â*, "Hear, O Yahweh, justice", though perhaps a construct ("Hear, O Yahweh of justice") may be read here as well. Cf. LXX, κύριε τῆς δικαιοσύνης μου, "O Lord of my justice". Jer renders *Deus iustum* by emendation or perhaps reading 'ēl *ṣaddîq*. The Hebrew *ṣdq* is also read adjectively by Aq, δίκαιον. Accordingly Eaton¹ admits that *ṣēdeq* here may be a designation of God as upholder of right. However, apparently being something that is to be heard, and parallel to *rinnātî* and *t°pillātî*, *ṣēdeq* seems to be a technical term for a "just cause" (RSV, NASB), a "righteous plea" (NIV), or even better a "plea for justice, or vindication" (NEB, GNB, Craigie,² and Dahood³). Following LXX, which has the pronominal suffix μου (so Vg, *iustitiam meam*), and again considering the parallelism with *rinnātî* and *t°pillātî*, we should perhaps read *ṣidqî*, "my (plea for) justice", with the pronoun (NEB, NIV, GNB, Dahood, Craigie, and Weiser⁴), though this could also be implied by parallelism. Thus Dahood resorts to the principle of double-duty (regarding the suffix), which he likewise applies to vv. 2, 3, 4, 7, and 8.⁵ The proposal of emendations such as *ṣarḥî* and *ṣa'a qātî* (BHS), which seriously affect the consonantal structure of the word, should not be pressed, given their high degree of improbability.

1.b MT *b°lō'*, "with not, with no, without", makes good sense in a poetic line like 1d, but it surely creates a problem for translators, as we can observe by looking at the modern versions and critical commentaries. Stich 1d is an adjective clause linked to "prayer", meaning "which is not uttered with deceitful lips" (= a prayer honestly uttered), or "with lips free of deceit, with undeceitful lips" (= a honest prayer). So GNB simplifies stichs 1c and 1d, "Listen to my honest prayer", while retaining the basic meaning. Dahood's

translation, "Destroy deceitful lips", seems to be the only one to depart from the common track followed by other modern scholars. He takes *b°lō'* (reading *ballē'*) as Piel imperative of *bl'*, "to wear out, destroy", assumed to be a by-form of *bālāh*, especially in the light of Jr 38:11,12, where *b°lō'ê* and *b°lōyê* occur as equivalent forms. He also claims that the root *bl'* is preserved in the Ugaritic substantive *nbl't*, "flame". His proposal seems attractive, but as Craigie has already pointed out, his philological grounds are uncertain.⁶ The verb *bālāh* means "wear out, grow old", but does not clearly carry the sense of "destroy" (the noun *tablît* may only loosely be translated "destruction" in Is 10:25). As for the Ugaritic *nbl't* (or *nblat*), its root, *bl'*, seems distinct from *bly*, "to wear out", and its etymology is uncertain. Gibson regards *nblat* as a borrowing from the Akkadian *nablu*.⁷ It is probable that the two forms in Jeremiah are merely phonetic variants and that no root *bl'* exists in Hebrew.⁸

2.a Dahood takes *yēṣē'* in the Ugaritic-Arabic sense, "to be clean, to shine" (a nuance to be also seen in Ps 65:9; 73:7; Is 13:10; Ho 6:3; Job 28:1; especially in Ps 37:6 and Is 62:1),⁹ and translates "Let my justice shine before you." This rendering is also attractive, but it seems that the Psalmist's judgment as deliverance, coming forth from Yahweh, perhaps announced by a priest (cf. Hab 1:4), is the idea conveyed by stich 2a.

2.b LXX has *ὁ ὀφθαλμοὶ μου*, "my eyes" (= *'ēnay*), which could imply that the Psalmist either wants to see justice being done (as requested in stich a), or that he wants to be able to discern what is right. But he is already sure of his innocence (vv. 3-5), and he might be asking God to certify himself of that. Thus MT, with *'ēneykā*, "your eyes", is to be retained.

2.c Standing in parallel with *mišpātî*, *mêšārîm* could be rendered "my integrity" (so Dahood). Also, along with *ṣedeq* of stich 1a, *mêšārîm* could be

taken adverbially (cf. also *laylâ* in 3b), for both stichs, 1a and 2b have corresponding structures (cf. Ct 1:4). Thus in 1a the Lord is asked to hear with justice, and in 2b, to see with equity (so NASB). But *mêšārîm* could be simply referring to "what is right or just", as we prefer to rend it (so Weiser, Craigie, JB, RSV, NIB, and GNB). As an abstract noun, its plural form serves only to intensify the idea of the stem.¹⁰

3.a One particular difficulty in this verse is the rendering of the three forms in the perfect *bāhantā*, *pāqadtā*, and *š^eraptanî*. It does not seem proper to have them translated into the past tense (so LXX, Vg, NASB, NEB, and Craigie), for the Psalmist could hardly be talking of something that had already taken place. The present tense seems unsatisfactory as well (so NIV and JB). To take them in a conditional sense, "If thou triest . . ." (so RSV, Weiser), without the appropriate particle *'im*, "if", is a bit doubtful, although the meaning becomes more acceptable to the context. In fact the best solution seems that presented by Dahood (so also Anderson¹¹). He parses these verbal forms as precativ perfect, the presence of which is made even clearer by the imperatives of v. 1 and the jussives of v. 2.¹² In other words, the psalmist is saying, "I ask you to test me . . ., but you will find nothing".

3.b *Laylâ* is clearly being employed adverbially, "at night, during night time", as we have already suggested in note 2.c, where *mêšārîm* (v. 2) and *š^edeq* (v.1) are said to be possibly being used in the same category.

3.c The ancient Versions read a noun here, seemingly *zimmātî*, for MT *zammōtî*. LXX has ἀδικία, "injustice", and reads, "injustice has not been found in me" (cf. Vg *iniquitas*). The suffix attached to *zimmāh*, "evil device, purpose", as explained by Dahood, has a local sense, much like Ps 59:4. But perhaps we should follow MT, in which *zmtî* is pointed as a verb, perfect of

zmm, "I am purposed", and introduces a new clause, as indicated by the preceding *'athnah*. Dahood's translation of *zimmāh* as "idolatry" is hardly convincing, and finds no clear support in the context of the psalm.

4.a The preposition *l* in *lip'ullôṭ 'ādām* is to be understood in the sense of "in respect to, as for, as regards".¹³

4.b LXX has ὁδοὺς σκληράς, "hard, difficult ways", for MT *'ār^ohôt pârîš*. It seems to be a mistranslation, for the psalmist must be referring to "the ways of the violent (robber, murderer) one" (Is 35:9; Jr 7:11; Ez 7:22; 18:10; Dn 11:14), exactly the kind of person from whom he is in need of deliverance. Syr prefixes the preposition *min* seemingly in an explanatory way, making explicit the sense that we would expect after Jos 6:18. Since *zmt̄y* in v. 3 can be read as a noun, and *bal-ya'a^abor-pî* fits well as the beginning of v. 4, this is how vv. 3-4 can also be rendered:

May you test my heart, may you visit (me) at night,
May you try me; you shall find no wickedness in me.
My mouth shall not transgress after the deeds of men,
By the word of your lips I have avoided the ways of the
violent.

Thus the structure of the lines seem more logical, and the parallels "mouth//lips", "the deeds of men//the ways of the violent" are in this way made more evident.

5.a MT has the verb *tāmāk*, "to grasp, support, attain", pointed as Qal infinitive absolute, *tāmōk*. However, we should either read the infinitive absolute as a finite verb,¹⁴ or read *tām^okû* as proposed by BHS (so RSV, NIV, NASB, and Craigie). Less probable are the emendations suggested by Oesterley,¹⁵ *tīt^omōk*, and Kissane,¹⁶ *tāmāk 'šûrî*, as well as the imperative forms read by the ancient Versions (LXX, Vg, Sym, Th, Jer, and Tg), for they do

not fit well in the context of the Psalmist's affirmation of innocence. However, another possible way is to read it as an infinitive used as a noun in the construct with *'ašūray*, "as for the holding fast of my steps."¹⁷

6.a Dahood might be right in taking *kî* "for", as an emphatic particle: "Surely you will" or "O that you would answer me, O El!" It fits well into the context and serves to give vivid expression to the emotional element present in v. 6. The apparent difficulty is that, since such use of *kî* would be largely applicable in the lament psalms, where wishes, petitions, and causal affirmations so often occur, we would have no valid criterion to distinguish between an emphatic and a causal *kî*.

6.b Some MSS, LXX, and Syr read a conjunction before the verbal form of stich 6b, *ûš'ma'*, "and hear". However, this seems unnecessary between two imperatives which give expression to the Psalmist's appeal in a dramatic fashion. The presence of such a conjunction would only serve to bring the tone of the verse down.

7.a MT reads *haplēh ḥāsādeykā*, "separate (or set apart) your steadfast love", which does not make sense. We should perhaps either read *haplē'* (Hiphil imperative of *pālā'*) "make wonderful, do wondrously", supported by a great number of MSS, CG, LXX, Vg (so also modern versions, Kissane, Oesterley, Craigie, Weiser), or read *ḥāsīd'kā*, "(set apart) your godly one", for the Hebrew *ḥāsādeykā* as suggested by Anderson. However, the first option would seem to convey a better sense.

7.b With *ἐπὶ σέ*, "in you", LXX makes explicit the sense that is already implied i.e. that "those who take refuge", *ḥôsim*, do it in God. There is no need for an emendation like *ḥôseh-bāk*, "the one who takes refuge in you" (BHS).

Another proposal is offered below, in the next note.

7.c This verse as a whole poses several difficulties for translators, especially in reference to the order in which the last four words are to be taken. Some read *môšî^a bîmînekā*, "you who save by your right hand"; others prefer to read *hôsîm bîmînekā*, "those who take refuge at your right hand". However, the words could well be left in the order in which they are found, as long as *mimmîṭqôm^emîm* is not translated as "from (their) enemies", but literally as "from those who rise up", and the following preposition *b^e* is rendered "against", which is in fact its sense when employed with verbs implying opposition, attack, or warfare (cf. Ex 1:10; Dt 19:15,16; etc.). Thus *mimmîṭqôm^emîm bîmînekā* can be smoothly rendered (and this is the most likely option in my judgment) "from those who rise up against your right hand (or your might)". Cf. LXX, ἐκ τῶν ἀνθεστηκότων τῇ δεξιᾷ σου, "from those who resist your right hand", Jer and Vg, *a resistentibus dexteræ tuæ*, with the same meaning. So also Kissane, Weiser, and Eaton. The oppressors of the weak are elsewhere referred to as God's enemies (cf. Is 1:23-24). This evokes Pr 14:31, "He who oppresses the poor man insults his maker . . ."

8.a MT has *'išôn bat-[']āyin*, "the pupil of the daughter of (the) eye". The term *'išôn* is diminutive of *'iš*, thus "little man", which corresponds to "pupil" (or "apple" as in the English counterpart idiomatic expression). It is also employed in Dt 32:10 and Pr 7:2 in the expression *'išôn 'ayin* (in Pr 7:9 it is connected to "night" and in 20:20 to "darkness"). The term *bat* is possibly being used here in a merely emphatic way, or perhaps, what seems more likely, as an explanatory gloss. The suffix "your (eye)" can be implied by the presence of a similar suffix in the second stich.

9.a MT *mipp^enê r^ešā'îm* is usually rendered "from the wicked" (RSV, NASB,

NIV, NEB, Kissane, Weiser, Craigie), or more literally "from the face (presence) of the wicked" (LXX, Vg, Oesterly). It could also be rendered "because of the wicked", in the light of so many other passages (cf. Gn 6:13; 27:4; 36:7; 41:31; 47:13; Ex 3:7; 8:20; Jos 2:11; Ju 2:18; Jr 4:4; etc.). However, it seems more appropriate to take *pānîm* in the sense of "fury" (so Dahood).¹⁸ Such a connotation can be attested elsewhere, as in the expression *l'et pāneykā*, "at the time of your face (fury)" (parallel to 'ap) in Ps 21:9[10]; "the face (fury) of Yahweh is against those who do evil" (Ps 34:16[17]); "because of the rebuke of your face (fury) they will perish" (Ps 80:16[17]); "the face (fury) of Yahweh has scattered them" (Lam 4:16).

9.b The Hebrew expression 'ōy^obay b^onepeš, literally "my enemies against (my) soul", is usually taken in the sense of "my deadly enemies" (so RSV, NASB, NIV, NEB, GNB, Oesterley, Dahood, Craigie). LXX (τὴν ψυχὴν μου περιέσχον), Jer, and Vg (*animam meam acircumdederunt*) take *nepeš* as object of the verb *nāqap* (Hiphil), "(my enemies) have encircled my soul". We should point out, however, that *nepeš* is here used in parallelism with *pānîm* in stich a, as the seat of appetite. Thus JB renders *b^onepeš* as "breathing hostility", and Kissane, "with fell desire". But I believe that this is one of the passages where *nepeš* means "greed" (cf. Ps 27:12 and 41:2[3]), and *b^onepeš* "in greed" or "greedily" (so Briggs-Briggs,¹⁹ Weiser, and Anderson²⁰). Ps 27:12 makes such meaning evident: "Give me not up to the *nepeš* (greed) of my adversaries, for false witnesses have risen against me and he who breathes out violence".

10.a MT has *sāg^o rû*, "they have closed", but a passive meaning would seem preferable here. Dahood reads a reconstructed Qal passive *sugārû* (pausal), and alludes to the frequency of the form in the El Amarna letters, Ugaritic, Phoenician, and MT, where it is found many times--he argues--wrongly

pointed as Pual.²¹ Whether or not his parsing is accurate, it is hard to tell, but the resulting sense, "they are enclosed or clogged", seems undoubtedly adequate. Cf. note 10.b below.

10.b MT has *ḥelbāmô*, "their fat", with an emphatic, archaic, poetic suffix, *-(ā)mô* for the regular *-ām*. The same suffix appears in *pîmô* in stich b. "Fat" (*ḥēleb*) is here used in parallelism with "pride, arrogance" (*gē'ût*), and all seems to indicate that it should have a similar sense. Cf. Dt 32:15, where it is said that "Jeshurum waxed fat, and kicked; . . . grew thick, . . . became sleek; then he forsook God . . . and scoffed at the Rock of his salvation". (By the way, the other idiomatic expression, "the apple of the eye", and the metaphor of protective wings of 17:8 are also found in Dt 32, vv. 10 and 11 respectively.) In Ps 73:7 "fat" is used in a context where the wicked (in his prosperity) is described as arrogant, proud, violent, full of follies, malice, and rebellion against God. This goes well in accord with Ps 17:7b and 10b (cf. Job 15:27). Its association with social injustice is clearly seen in Jer 5:28 and its context (vv.26-29). It seems that obesity, a proverbial feature of the wicked rich in ancient Israel, became a metaphor for their pride, haughtiness, and arrogance, for their contempt regarding the observance of Israel's Covenant laws (and hence their rebellious spirit against God). By extension, there must have emerged the expression *ḥēleb lēb*, "the fat of the heart", as seen in Ps 119:70. Cf. Is 6:10, *ḥašmēn lēb-hā'ām hazzeh*, "make fat the heart of this people". Thus we should perhaps adopt the emendation proposed by BHS (also Oesterley following Kittel), reading *ḥlb lbmw* ("the fat of their heart") for MT *ḥlbmw*, which could have become contracted by haplography. Adopting the same emendation Kraus offers an attractive translation of stich a, "with fat they have enclosed their heart".²² With the reading *ḥlb lbmw* two parts of the body, "heart" and "mouth", neatly function as *parallelismus membrorum* (as they

perhaps originally did) in our distich, which by the way recalls Jesus's maxim, "The mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart" (Mt 12:34; Lk 6:45).

10.c Though not preceded by a preposition, MT *pîmô* (as well as *ḥelbāmô* in stich a) may be taken as adverbial accusative. Hence our rendering, "with their mouth", and "with the fat of their hearts". Cf. Jer, *adipo suo*.

11.a MT has *'aššûrênû*, "our footsteps", which does not make good sense in stich a preceding "now they surround me". The ancient Versions read a verb with a 1st p. sing. pron. suffix instead. LXX has ἐκβάλλοντέ με, "they have cast me out" (= *gēr°šûnî*; cf. 1 Sam 26:19, or Aramaic *'šdwny*), followed by Vg, *proicientes me*. Syr reads *'išš°rûnî*, which seems to be the basis for Jer *incedentes adversum me*, "they advance towards me", and Sym μακαρίζοντές με, "they consider me fortunate". Although both meanings can be applied to *'išš°rûnî*, this form along with Jerome's rendering might well correspond to the original text. This rendering is followed by RSV, NIV, NEB, Weiser, and Craigie. Oesterley reads the verb without the awkward suffix (a prepositional phrase would be more usual), and Kissane suggests *'išš°rûn w°*, "they advance and (now surround me)", but these emendations seem as unlikely as those of Kraus (*y°šûrûnî*, "they lie in wait for me"), and J. Lindblom (*'šrymw*, "(now) their footsteps (surround me)"),²³ despite the apparent good sense they make.

11.b Qere, CG, Tg, and many MSS have *s°bābûnû*. However, LXX, Jer, and Syr follow the Kethib *s°bābûnî* with a 1st p. pl. pron. suffix, which undoubtedly seems more appropriate in the context.

11.c The verbal form *lin°tôt*, "to bend, spread out, pitch a tent", can be read with a 1st p. sing. pron. suffix, *lin°tôtēnî*, with the support of Syr, or the suffix may be just implied on account of the double-duty principle. There is no

need to emend *lin^otôṭ* to *lin^otōš*, "to leave, forsake, abandon" (Buttenwieser), or into the causative, *l^ohattôṭ*, "to cast down" (Anderson). However, there is another attractive, literal way to render line *b*: "They set their eyes (they purpose) to pitch their tent (to settle) in the land" (so Briggs-Briggs, though moving *lin^otôṭ* *bā'āres* to verse 12).

12.a MT *dimyōnô*, "his likeness", is doubtful, for *dimyōn* is a *hapax legomenon*, and a 3rd p. sing. suffix occurs where a plural one would have been expected. However, if the suffix in v. 13 is original, *dimyōnô* has a good chance to be correct. It is further supported by Tg, Aq, Syr, and Jer. Along with Delitzsch,²⁴ Craigie holds the opinion that the poet here singles out the chief or leader of the enemy host. LXX has a verb followed by the 1st p. sing. pronoun, ὑπέλαβόν με, "they take me up" (Vg *susceperunt me*), reading apparently the Piel of *dāmāh*, *dimmûnî*, "they liken, compare me", which only involves an exchange of position between yodh and waw. But this puts the simile the wrong way round. Attractive is Kissane's *dām^oyûn*, "they appear, are like". But best is probably Leupold's rendering of *dimyōnô* as "the likeness of each one of them", or "each one is like", since the pron. suffix often has a distributive force. On the other hand, Oesterley's *dimmû-lî* "they devise against me" (following Gunkel); Briggs-Briggs's "they maltreat" (separating *ynw* from *dm(w)*, which is attached to the preceding line); and Dahood's "the land of perdition" (deriving *dimyōnô* from *dāmāh*, "to cease, destroy", and attaching it to the preceding line), all seem far too fetched for our context.

12.b MT has *yōšēb* *b^omistārîm*, literally "sitting in hiding places".

13.a LXX has the pronoun in the plural, αὐτούς, "them" (so NIV), perhaps because *rāšā'* in stich *b* can be understood collectively (LXX has ἀσεβοῖς, "the wicked"). The change to the singular in MT could be due to the figure in

v. 12, but at any rate such sudden shifts seem to be characteristic of imprecatory speech.

13.b The Hebrew *ḥarbakā*, "your sword", is taken in the accusative by LXX (ῥομφαίαν σου) and Vg (*frameam tuam*), and attached to v. 14a, whereas Jer take it as a relative clause, *qui est gladius tuus*. Syr reads *wmn ḥrb'*, "and from the sword". The evident confusion of the ancient Versions in dealing with such an unusual construction may be due to the fact that the ancient translators failed to recognize here a peculiar idiom, i.e., the occurrence of two subjects in a verbal sentence, the second of which is sometimes called accusative of instrument and can be rendered by an adverbial phrase.²⁵ This seems satisfactory but there has been attempts to improve the text through emendation. Believing that the text is defective Briggs-Briggs inserts *ḥ^arōb* (Qal imperative as in Jr 50:21,27, here omitted by haplography) before *ḥarbakā*, rendering (still with accusative of instrument) "destroy with thy sword". Kissane emends the latter to *ḥōr^opekā*, "who reviles you". As usual, Dahood does not change the consonantal text, but he too takes *ḥarbakā* in apposition to the preceding word, *rāšā'*, and vocalizes it as pausal participle, *ḥōr^obekā*, "who wars on you". Such emendations make sense but they annul the parallelism that can be observed between *ḥarbakā* and *yād^okā*, "(by) your hand" in the first stich of the following verse, since both are to be preferably rendered adverbially.

14.a Verse 14 is undoubtedly the most difficult of Ps 17. It is perhaps rightly admitted to be corrupt (cf. BHS), and this process could have started at an early date, as the wide disparity between the ancient Versions indicates.²⁶ It is no wonder then that most translators resort to emendations. Our first note here is related to the Hebrew expressions *mim^otîm yād^okā*, "from men (by) your

hand", and *mim^otîm mēheled*, "from men of the world". A couple of objections to *mim^otîm* were rightly pointed out by Kissane in that as the text now stands *mim^otîm* is made equivalent to "from wicked men", and that "the wicked could be described as men 'whose portion is in (this) life' only by one who believed in the happiness of the just in a future life".²⁷ To this we should add that we still have the question concerning the doubtful double use of *mim^otîm*. For its first occurrence LXX has ἀπὸ ἐχθρῶν (Vg *ab inimicis*), "from the enemies (of your hands)", and ἀπὸ ὀλίγων ἀπὸ γῆς, "from a few from the earth", for MT *mim^otîm mēheled* (Vg *a paucis*). For Kraus this is the result of an improvised combination, since in Ps 105:12 ὀλίγων corresponds to *mty* and γῆς corresponds to *hld* in Ps 49:2. Other LXX Codices (B and U) have a verb for the second *mmty*, ἀπολ(λ)ύων ἀπὸ γῆς, "destroy (them) from the earth". With *a viris manus tuae*, "from men of your hands", Jer looks closer to MT, but in the second instance *mmty* is rendered *qui mortui sunt*, "who are dead", in accord with Aq (ἀπὸ τεθνηκότων), Sym (ἀπὸ νεκρῶν), and Syr, which point *mmty* as *mimmēlîm*, "from the dead". The same lack of consensus is also to be found among critical scholars. Kissane emends *mmty* to *mamrîm* and *mumālîm* (part. Hophal with a gerundive force) and renders: "The rebels against Thy hand, Yahweh, are doomed to death".²⁸ He has in mind the term used for the wicked in v. 7b, "they that resist thy right hand". Oesterley too suggests two verbal forms with consonantal changes, *h^amîlēm*, "slay them", and *h^atimmēm*, "destroy them". Briggs-Briggs prefers to read *mmty* in both occurrences as a defective form of the Hophal part., *mûmālîm*, rendering "may they be slain" (as in 2 Kg 11:2), whereas Kraus thinks that *mmty* might be a defective form of the intensive plural *m^omōtîm*, "a horrible death (from your hand)". I believe that Dahood, followed here by Anderson and Craigie, has offered the most attractive option (though not new in sense) by vocalizing the

duplicated form *mmtym* as *m^omîlām*, the Hiphil part. of *mwt*, "to die", used with the force of an imperative, "kill them". This rendering seems to fit the context better, but by no means can it be said to be conclusive.

14.b MT *mēheled* is usually rendered "from the world", whereby *heled* is taken in the sense of "this age, the present world order", corresponding to the Greek αἰών. However, LXX has ἀπὸ γῆς, "from the earth (or the land)" (so Vg *de terra*), which corresponds to the Hebrew 'eres. Aq (ἐκ καταδύσεως, "from going down"), Syr (*dhpr*), "from the pit") and Jer (*in profundo*, "in the deep") apparently read a noun from the root *hld* with its likely variant meaning, "to dig", equivalent to *hāpar*. As a normal consequence of his rendering of *mmtym*, Kraus is led to read a verb here, and he suggests that it could have been an imperfect (jussive) Piel or Hiphil of *hdl*, "to cease", obtained by swopping two consonants of *hld*. Kissane emends *mēheled* to *mah^alā*, "sickness, disease", from *hlh*, "to be weak, sick", and renders, "Sorrow is their portion during life". No doubt this is a possibility, but it does not seem to fit the context, leaving the usual rendering, "from the world", as perhaps the most likely alternative as yet.

14.c MT *helqām bahayyîm*, "whose portion (is) in (this) life" (so Jer, *quorum pars in vita*), is omitted by CG. Perhaps we should read a verb here for *helqām*. LXX has διαμέρισον αὐτοὺς, "scatter them" (Vg *divide eos*); Oesterley, following Gressmann and Gunkel, offers an attractive emendation, *hall^ošam*, "snatch them (from life)". But again it seems that to Dahood should be credited what is apparently the most likely solution. He points *hlqm* as *hall^oqēm*, Piel imperative of *hālaq*, taken in the sense of "to perish, die", in the light of the Akkadian verb *halāqu*, "to be lost, perish", and especially the Ugaritic *hlq*, "to perish". The resulting parallelism of the roots *mwt* and *hlq* in

this verse has a remarkable counterpart in the Ugaritic Baal Cycle: *kmt aliyn b'l khlq zbl b'l ars*, "for mightiest Baal is dead, for the prince lord of earth has perished".²⁹ Thus the phrase *hall°qēm b°hayyîm* is rendered, "make them perish from among the living", with *b°hayyîm* (not *ba-*) balancing *mēheled* and the preposition *b°* meaning "from" as in Ugaritic.

14.d MT has *t°mallē'* (Piel imperfect) *bitnām*, "you will fill their belly", but LXX with ἐπλήσθη ἡ γαστήρ αὐτῶν, "their belly will be filled", reads the Niphal imperfect *timmalē'* (so also Syr and Tg). Either of these forms seem to work fine here, but they are to be rendered as precativ, in conformity with the entreating nature of the suppliant's words. Thus our rendering "may their belly be filled . . ."

14.e There is here the possibility of two different readings, based on the forms of Kethib and Qere, with a contrasting effect. Along with the ancient Versions I have given preference to the Kethib, *š°pûn°kâ*, "(with) your hidden things" or "(with) what you have stored up", referring to the punishment stored up by God for future retribution (cf. Job 21:19, "God stores up their iniquity for their sons"; also Ex 20:5 and Dt 5:9), as if it were a mysterious "food" which is paradoxically not a source of life but of death, whereby the poet's enemies as well as their children and grandchildren shall be ironically satiated by God. The Qere *š°pûn°kâ* (Qal passive part.), found in CG and many MSS, can also be rendered "your stored-up things [punishment]", but its meaning in Ez 7:22, referring to Jerusalem, is "treasured one", and in Ps 83:4, applied to the people of Israel, it denotes God's "hidden or treasured ones". Kissane, Dahood, and Craigie adopt the latter rendering, which is certainly possible, but probably not the correct one here. This rendering is well represented by Dahood's:

But as for your treasured ones - fill their belly,

may their children enjoy abundance,
and leave their wealth to their offspring.³⁰

The context leads one to think that vv. 13-14 have only to do with the punishment of the wicked, the suppliant's enemies, and that besides this the psalmist's sole concern, determined by the acuteness of his plight and the urgency of his case, is with his own safety. Thus a sudden change of object would seem improper in this place, even more so as a proper change is already clearly introduced in the beginning of v. 15, with an emphatic *'a nî*, "as for me".

15.a LXX has a passive verbal form (ὀφθῆσομαι τῷ προσώπῳ σου, "I shall appear before your face"), perhaps reading *'ehāzeh* for MT *'eh^ozeh*, "I shall behold", and it places no preposition before *pāneykā*. The translators seem to have avoided the harshness of the literal expression whereby the poet "shall see God's face".

15.b The expression *b^ohāqîṣ t^omûnātekā* is probably referring either to the arising of God's form as in a nocturnal apparition (cf. Job 4:16), or to the awakening of the psalmist in the morning (the lack of the suffix is not important here), and not to the fact of resurrection, which Dahood implies from his understanding of the use of the word in other contexts. The noun *t^omûnâ*, "likeness, form", is parallel to *pānîm*, "face, presence", denoting God's presence, as in a theophany. It is very likely that a priestly or prophetic oracle is here implied, as in the case of many other lament psalms. Perhaps for theological reasons, LXX prefers to render that expression as ἐν τῷ ὀφθῆναι τὴν δόξαν σου, "in the appearing of your glory".

3.1.3. Critical and Literary Considerations

According to the traditional form-critical method, Ps 17 belongs to the type or genre (Gunkel's *Gattung*) of psalms known as Lament Psalms of the Individual, and because of vv. 3-5 it is usually considered to form, along with Pss 5, 7, 26 and 35, a subclass known as Psalms of Innocence. The Psalms of Lament, of which the great majority are psalms of the individual, correspond to the psalm type mostly found in the Psalter, making up nearly one third of all the Psalms. However, there is more than a slight difference among Old Testament scholars in regard to their classification, judging from the lists available. By comparing the lists offered, for instance, by Gunkel, Kraus, Westermann, Weiser, Barth, and Anderson,³¹ we come up with the following reference list, with almost every item being supported by at least three of them (the only exceptions are Pss 4, 40, 77, and 125, which appear only twice):

Lament Psalms of the Individual: 3-7, 13, 17, 22, 25-28, 31, 35, 38-43, 51, 54-57, 59, 61, 63-64, 69, 71, 77, 86, 88, 102, 109, 120, 130, and 140-143;

Lament Psalms of the Community: 44, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 85, 90, 125, and 137.

Besides these there are of course those which are found outside the Psalter. In spite of the method employed in the production of the present list, it is not necessarily to be taken as complete or perfect. As a matter of fact, with Westermann I am persuaded that a few other psalms could be added to this list, if we want to make it more exhaustive.

As for the *Sitz im Leben* of Ps 17, Weiser infers from vv. 7-8, 13, and 15 that it was uttered as a prayer "at the celebration of the cult of the Covenant Festival where Yahweh appears above the sacred Ark to sit in judgment on evildoers and to reveal his salvation to the community of the godly (. . .)".³² There seems to be no doubt that this prayer was in fact part of an ancient Israelite cultic rite, but its use was certainly not limited to any special festival.

It represents the supplication of a man seeking deliverance from his oppressors, and as such it could be used whenever the need arose. The generalities of the psalm, as in the case of most Lament Psalms of the Individual, give support to such a conclusion.

According to some scholars, the cultic rites presupposed by the laments of the individual do not even need in fact to be taken as necessarily related to the temple. Albertz³³ has suggested that their setting is to be found in a *Kleincult* apart from the temple. In its religious activities of a pastoral type were carried out dealing with personal crises related to the life-cycle processes of birth and death. Following a similar line of interpretation, Gerstenberger³⁴ has taken these psalms as the spoken part of a ritual action conducted by an expert (perhaps a seer) on behalf of a client. The audience was the suppliant's primary group, including his family, friends, and neighbours, forming a setting which could roughly correspond to what we today would call a house church or a base community. These proposals are indeed very attractive, and it is hard not to believe that they might reflect the real life-situation of a number of psalms in ancient Israel.³⁵

However, a connection with the temple cannot be simply ruled out. And the more so if Ps 17 could be proved to be a Royal Psalm, as Eaton believes it is.³⁶ For him Ps 17 is a prayer made by a king (speaking as the people's representative) in a situation of great need, i.e., a case of national invasion, when "the king is apparently threatened by a punitive expedition on the grounds of some accusation".³⁷ The very title *t°pillâ l°dāwid* is used as an argument, but there can be no certainty that every single psalm bearing the heading *l°dāwid* was originally used in connection with the royal rites.³⁸ It is true that a royal interpretation offers a good base for an explanation of the

Hebrew plural forms in v. 11, but the words describing the enemies (vv.a 7, 9-14) could be also interpreted as general poetical language in which the violent threats and actions of the adversaries are described through the use of military metaphor (so Craigie). The enemies here spoken of, as is the case in many other psalms, seem to belong to the Israelite community. Were they aliens, this fact almost certainly would have been made clear, like, for instance, in Ps 83:3,4 and elsewhere. Johnson, who ascribes the Psalm to a pre-exilic cultic prophet, follow Eaton's line of interpretation, by identifying the suppliant as David himself or a subsequent member of his dynasty.³⁹

The royal interpretation of Ps 17 has much to commend it, but in an even better position is the juridical theory advanced by Schmidt (somewhat followed by Weiser, Kraus, and Anderson) and further developed by Beyerlin and Delekat,⁴⁰ according to which a process of litigation is implied, whereby the falsely accused man (or sometimes the plaintiff) resorts to Yahweh through cultic means as a final court of appeal. The text recorded in Dt 17:8-11 (cf. also 1 Kg 8:31ff.) seems to lay the basis for this practice.⁴¹ In the light of this the Psalms of Innocence are usually interpreted as the petition of a falsely accused person.

For Dahood the poet of Ps 17 has been falsely accused of worshipping idols.⁴² Such a precise interpretation may seem unwarranted in the light of the scarce information provided by the psalm itself. However, if a false accusation is to be seen implied here, it is likely to be one that could lead the accused to death, as for instance the case depicted in Dt 17:2-7. This would be in accord with the references that suggest that the suppliant is in peril of death, leaving open the possibility for one to suppose that an act of socioeconomic injustice might lay behind the juridical process. To take advantage of the

juridical system and the venality of judges as a means to exploit and oppress the weak and poor seems to have become a recurrent practice among unscrupulous members of the aristocracy and rich land owners in ancient Israel. Such evil practice finds in the case of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kg 21:1-16) its most clear and eloquent expression. In fact socioeconomical oppression in the hands of the powerful rich, whether or not directly connected to a formal process of litigation, is likely to be the actual foreground or background reason for the affliction voiced in many psalms of lament of the individual. It seems quite obvious that the poor and needy, the weaker members of society, in their flagrant state of vulnerability and helplessness, were the ones who most often had to resort to the means provided by the cultus for their protection.

There is a particular religious practice possibly related to Ps 17 (vv. 3, 15) and other psalms as well to which we should perhaps make some reference here. It is the practice of incubation, first pointed out by Mowinckel,⁴³ whereby the suppliant spends the night in the sanctuary in the expectation of being given the divine answer in the morning, which would probably be communicated to him by means of an oracle (cf. Dt 17:11).

No matter how the *Sitz im Leben* of this particular psalm may be explained,⁴⁴ it is clear that here we have a prayer of a distressed, weak member of the Israelite community, who is falsely accused and despoiled by the wicked, his greedy and deadly enemies. Based in his innocence and faithfulness to Yahweh, and conversely in the wickedness of his enemies, he cries for God's justice, expected to be revealed in his deliverance and the punishment of his foes. The poem closes with an affirmation of hope of deliverance, to be accomplished in the suppliant's encounter with God as he

awakes, apparently in the morning.

Although nothing definitive can be said in regard to the time of composition of Ps 17, it is however likely to have first appeared in pre-exilic times.⁴⁵ The text seems corrupted in some verses, and therefore both the sense of some passages and the structure of the poem has become obscure. It presents three major parts (vv. 1-5; 6-12; 13-15), but there is no real trace of regular strophic arrangement,⁴⁶ and the metre, with doubts principally emerging from vv. 3, 7, 13, and 14, can be thus determined (on the basis of the text as it now stands): $4+4$: vv. 3[?], 4, 6, 9, 13[?]; $4+3$: vv. 12, 14ab, 15; $3+4$: v. 11; $3+3$: vv. 2, 8; $3+2$: vv. 1ab, 5; $2+3$: vv. 1cd, 10; $2+2+2[?]$: v. 7; $3+2+3[?]$: v. 14cd.⁴⁷ In two places in the text we notice a case of metrical inversion, a decrescent one in v. 1 ($3+2$, $2+3$), and a crescent one in vv. 11-12 ($3+4$, $4+3$). What we have called "metrical inversion" (crescent and decrescent) is a stylistic device very often found in Hebrew poetry, especially in the Psalms, involving a symmetric variation of cadence, usually among two distichs of related meaning, with the effect of conveying grace and movement to the poem, besides laying stress on the shared meaning of the lines in question. I have already referred to it elsewhere as a kind of metrical chiasm.

It is also to be noted the presence of an envelope figure⁴⁸ encompassing the whole poem, whereby identical words (*sedeq*, *pānēkā*, and *hzh*) are used at the beginning and at the end of the text (vv. 1f. and 15). As has been pointed out by Ridderbos in his stylistic analysis of Ps 17,⁴⁹ the number three seems to play an important role in this poem. Three times on two occasions the psalmist asks to be heard (vv. 1 and 6); three times he requests to be tested (v. 3); three times he protests his integrity (vv. 3c-5). Also, we have already mentioned the fact that the poem is composed of three major parts. However,

the basic structure of the psalm can also be analytically divided according to its particular subject matter, as follows:

1. Address and introductory appeal for justice (vv. 1-2)
2. Declaration of innocence and integrity (vv. 3-5)
3. Petition concerning the enemies (vv. 6-14)
 - Petition for deliverance from the enemies (vv. 6-9)
 - Description of the enemies (vv. 10-12)
 - Petition for the punishment of the enemies (vv. 13-14)
4. Affirmation of hope in God's justice (v. 15)

3.2. APPROACHING AND PLEADING WITH GOD

Here we shall direct our attention to the way in which the suppliant addresses God and introduces his petitions. As for the latter, we shall look at the words (mostly vocative expressions and imperative verbal forms) which are employed to convey or express the suppliant's petitions. This exercise will open before us the spectrum of personal interests and concerns which the ancient Israelites left recorded in their prayers (at least in the extant ones which came down to us in the Psalter), and the level and nature of their personal relationship with God. As for the petitions directly involving the punishment of enemies, given their special character, we shall take them up later on, as we deal with the issue of the enemies as a whole.

3.2.1. Addressing God

In the individual lament psalms God is usually addressed in a direct form not only at the beginning, where the psalmist's passionate pleading is also usually introduced, but in other sections of the psalm as well. This is the case with Psalm 17, in which the Divinity is invoked at the beginning of three major sections. "Yahweh" appears in the invocative in vv. 1 and 13 (here in

connection with a petition for the punishment of the enemies), and 'ēl in v. 6. That our psalmist's is a cry in a very desperate situation there seems to be no doubt. This can be clearly attested by the general tone of his words, among which, as it appears in our translation, fifteen imperative verbal forms are employed, usually in small clusters displayed in rapid succession.

No matter the inevitable controlling role that the cultic institution might have played in the suppliant's experience, such a role can be said to have been more supportive than intrusive, for the poem, despite its generalized, conventional style, is tailored to convey the petitioner's legitimate cry, as he calls upon God in a very personal way. In his need and affliction, he has direct access to Yahweh's court of justice. The door is opened to him by effect of his calling upon the name of God who, by all means, is also a person, and not a rescue machine or a supernatural force, to use Westermann's expression.⁵⁰ To call upon a divine name is to establish connection with the divine being, is to activate a line of communication between both parties along which a dynamic exchange of personal, intimate elements takes place. Something is supposed to happen, as when we switch on a powerful electric generator. In such context to take God's name in vain is dangerous, and considered to be a serious offense, as stated in the Ten Words (Ex 20:7).

If a pagan deity is supposedly put under the coercive power of a devotee who knows and calls upon the deity's secret name, Yahweh, on the other hand, is not subject to such magical devices. He cannot be controlled, but merely beseeched and implored for mercy. He can only be pressed by his devotees, as sometimes seems to happen, on grounds of his covenantal loyalty (*hesed*), and even then his answer is an acknowledged act of grace.

A unique feature of the Akkadian Psalms of Lament is the long list of

descriptive attributes ascribed to the deity in the address section, possibly designed for hymnic recitation, as seen for instance in the Prayer of Lamentation to Ishtar.⁵¹ The attributes usually refer to the deity as creator, protector and benefactor of the people and land, preserver of justice and righteousness, and merciful, as shown in the examples given below, selected from different psalms:

Creator of the whole totality of heaven and earth.
 Creator of everything.
 Creator of corn and plants.
 Creator of all mankind.
 Lord of destinies.
 Lord of the springs of mountains and of seas.
 Preserver of people.
 Protection of settlements.
 Shadow of the country.
 Protecting the life.
 Giving life.
 Providing victory.
 Keeping truth and justice pure.
 Destroying the wicked.
 Causing the bad to perish.
 Causing all people to go aright.
 Merciful God (father, lord).
 Accepting prayer and supplication.
 Hearing the prayer.
 Compassionate.
 Loosing the bonds.
 Seizing the hands of the fallen.⁵²

The heaping up of complimentary predicates in the Babylonian psalms has been understood as a means by which the suppliant, wishing to insinuate himself or herself in the deity's favour, tries to persuade him or her by flattery.⁵³ Although such a view has not been left unchallenged,⁵⁴ it cannot be denied that irrespective of the suppliant's personal feelings at the time of the cultic recitation of the psalm, the technical, formal structure of the poem is one which involves flattery, and the cultic intention that lies behind the "sacred" formulation of the poem is no doubt one that seeks to please the deity and compell him or her to act favourably on behalf of the petitioner.

This expansion of the address to God in Babylonian psalms through the use of long lists of doxological predicates stand in stark contrast to the Old Testament psalms of lament, which effectively do not employ such a formal device.⁵⁵ Here, as we have already suggested, God is not pressed by flattery, but by the gravity of his own creature's plight and fundamentally by his fidelity to the Covenant by which he is bound to his people. In the biblical psalms, especially in those of lament, God is called on in a very simple and direct way. There is a remarkable sense of immediacy and intimacy when people speak to God. Most often God is called on by name only, either as "God" or most often as "Yahweh", as in the examples below:

Hear a just cause, O Yahweh! (17:1)
 I call upon you . . . O God! (17:6)
 O Yahweh, how many are my foes! (3:1[2])
 O Yahweh, rebuke me not in thy anger! (6:1[2])
 To you, O Yahweh, I lift up my soul. (25:1)

The closeness to or intimacy of the oppressed with God is shown not only in this quick, direct way of approaching God, but also in the pronominal vocative expressions which denote a personal attachment to the deity, such as "O my God!" (22:1,2[3,4]; 25:2; 38:21[22];40:17[18]; 43:4; 59:1[2]; 71:4,12,22; 102:24[25]); "O Yahweh my God!" (7:1[2]; 7:3[4]; 13:3[4]; 35:24; 38:15[16]; 86:12; 88:1; 109:26); "O Yahweh my Lord!" (102:24[25]; 109:21; 141:8); "my King and my God!" (5:2[3]; cf. 44:4; 84:3[4]); "O my God and my Lord!" (35:23); etc.

Besides the element of closeness and personal relationship, such immediacy of speaking to God in the individual lament psalms also conforms to their usual highly emotional tone marked by a sense of despair and urgency. This is especially clear in cases of double invocation, "O my God! O my God!" (22:1), "O God, my God!" (43:4).

Attributes are ascribed to God in direct (vocative) and indirect (descriptive) form, but such attributes are not presented in a list form as in the Babylonian psalms. Here they are rather sparse and mostly cast in a more personal tone, bearing witness to the psalmist's personal relationship to and confidence in God. The attributive expressions are quite varied, but throughout God is primarily depicted as the God of deliverance and protection. Here are some examples: "O God of my salvation" (27:9; 51:14[16]; 85:4[5]; 65:5[6]); "O Yahweh, God of truth!" (31:5[6]); "you are my help and my deliverer" (41:17[18]); "the God of my life" (42:8[9]); "(God) my rock" (28:1; 42:9[10]); "God of my exceeding joy" (43:4); "God most high" (57:2[3]); "the God of my mercy" (59:17[18]); "O Yahweh (God) of hosts" (80:4[5]; 80:19[20]; 84:8[9]; 84:1[2]; 84:3[4]); "O God of hosts" (80:7[8]; 80:14[15]); "O Lord Yahweh of hosts" (69:6[7]); "O God of my justice" (4:1[2] and perhaps 17:1); "O my strength" (39:9[10]); "O God of my praise" (109:1), "O my God and rock of my salvation" (89:26[27]), "my refuge and my fortress, my God" (91:2); "O (Yahweh) God of revenge" (94:1).

Whether approaching God by the use of a short or expanded addressing form, bearing or not one or more attributes, the ancient Israelites were used to taking God's personhood quite seriously in their prayers. As Guthrie has pointed out,

Given the world from which these laments arose, the cry "my God" is more than an aboriginal exclamation. It is a specific designation of the god that the lamenter turns to for concrete action against the forces of evil and chaos. It is an identification of the God in whom the suppliant places his faith.⁵⁶

3.2.2. Requesting God's Attention and Benevolence

As one might expect, entreating formulas and expressions constitute a prominent feature of the laments of the ancient Israelites. The Psalter presents them in striking abundance and variety. Besides, God is normally beseeched in a direct form and with a remarkable insistence, indicating both the suppliant's proximity to God and the gravity of his plight. These elements are so crucial that even the stylistic conventions to which the prayers were subjected (either in their original composition or due to a later process of standardization for their continuous use) could not overshadow them.

There are basically two kinds of entreaties in the psalms of lament of the individual. Some are of a generic nature and geared to call for God's attention and mercy, whereas the others are appeals for God's direct intervention and help, related to the real problems faced by the suppliants. Invariably the suppliants are in need of some sort of liberation, which only God can accomplish. Here we shall deal with the former type of petition, examining in particular the verbal expressions involved and their usual objects, leaving the latter to be treated in the next section.

Psalm 17 opens with three imperative verbal forms, which are the most appropriate and most employed ones by the psalmists to call on God's attention: *šim'â*, "hear!" (sometimes *šema'*, without the paragogic *he*; 4:1[2]; 17:6; 27:7; 28:2; 30:10[11]; 39:12[13]; 54:2[4]; 61:1[2]; 64:1[2]; 84:8[9]; 102:1[2]; 119:149; 130:2; 141:1); *haqšîbâ*, "listen!" (5:2[3]; 55:2[3]; 61:1[2]; 86:6; 142:6[7]); *ha'azînâ*, "give ear!" (5:1[2]; 39:12[13]; 54:2[4]; 55:1[2]; 84:8[9]; 86:6; 140:6[7]; 141:1; 143:1). As in Ps 17, any two of them may appear together elsewhere in the Psalter, displayed in synomynous parallelism, as for instance:

O God, hear (*šm'*) my prayer,

give ear ('zn) to the words of my mouth. (54:2[4])

O God, hear (šm') my cry,
listen (qšb) to my prayer. (61:1[2])

Give ear ('zn), O Yahweh, to my prayer,
and listen (qšb) to the voice of my supplications. (86:6)

The verb *šāma'* appears again in 17:6, where we have a new cluster of three entreating verbal forms. The other two verbs are also of high frequency in the Psalter. One of them is *nātah*, "to stretch out, incline, bend", in the Hiphil imperative, *hat* (*hattēh* elsewhere in the Psalter), used in the expression *hat-'ozn^akā (lî)* and similar ones, meaning "incline your ear (to me)" (31:2[3]; 71:2; 86:1; 88:2[3]; 102:2[3]). The other one is *'ānāh*, "to answer", which here is not in the imperative, but in the imperfect. However, in the light of the context, as often happens even with forms in the perfect (cf. our translation of 17:2-3 and the respective textual notes), it is likely that *ta'^anēnî* has a precative force here. The imperative form, though, is quite common in the Psalter (4:1[2]; 13:3[4]; 27:7; 55:2[3]; 60:5[7]; 69:13[14]; 69:16[17]; 69:17[18]; 86:1; 102:2[3]; 143:1; 143:7), and at times it is again employed with *nātah* (cf. 86:1; 102:2[3]).

It is a clear fact that the precative formulas of the psalms which employ these verbs follow a conventional style to which also belongs the respectful treatment due to persons of rank. But they are certainly meant to be much more than mere polite expressions. Behind them lie an earnest spirit and a troubled heart, caused by a concrete and acute social distress.

Stressing our basic assumption that the prayers of lament have mostly to do with the poor, we find the participle of *šāma'* being twice used in reference to God in a suggestive way. In 65:2[3] he is addressed as *šōmē^a t^apillâ*, "he who hears prayer", and in 69:33[34] we have the clause *kî-šōmē^a 'el-'ebyônîm*

Yhwh, "for Yahweh hears the needy", which can also be rendered, "for *hearer* of the poor is Yahweh". He is the One whom the poor and oppressed of the land resort to, and by whom their prayers are heard in the sanctuary.

With one exception (*'nh*), the verbs hitherto considered are, on the surface, of an auditive nature, although we know that in fact they imply much more than an auditive phenomenon. A large number of verbs are used to convey the suppliant's request for God's benevolence and mercy in a variety of manners and emphasis. Very often the "hear" petition is boosted with a request for God to have due regard for that which is brought before him by the suppliant. It is in this sense that *r°'ēh*, "see! consider!", Qal imperative of *rā'āh*, is mostly used in the psalms (9:13[14]; 25:18,19; 59:4[5]; 80:14[15]; 119:153; 84:9[10]). In the same line we may have *habbēt* or *habbîṭāh*, "look! consider!", Hiphil imperative of *nābat* (13:3[4]; 74:20; 80:14[15]; 84:9[10]), and also *bînāh*, "consider!", Qal imperative of *bîn*, "to discern, observe, consider" (5:1[2]).

Still in the same connection we sometimes find references to God's remembrance, when he is asked either to remember or not to forget something, or even not to remember, in the case of sins and iniquities of the suppliant. The verbal forms here used are, *z°kar*, "remember!", Qal imperative of *zākar* (25:6,7; 74:2,18,22; 89:47[48], 50[51]; 106:4); *'al-tizkōr*, "do not remember!", Qal imperfect of *zkr* (25:7; 79:8); and *'al-tiškah*, "do not forget", Qal imperfect of *škh* (10:12; 74:19,23).

In appealing to God's benevolence, one of the most notorious expressions is *hānnēnî*, "be gracious unto me", or "have mercy on me", Qal imperative of the verb *hānan* (4:1[2]; 6:2[3]; 9:13[14]; 25:16; 26:11; 27:7; 30:10[11]; 31:9[10]; 41:4[5], 10[1]; 51:1[3]; 56:1[2]; 57:1,1 [2,2]; 86:3,16; 119:58,132). It is twice used

in the plural, *ḥānnēnû*, in a communal lament (123:3,3). Of the same nature are the expressions *p^onēh 'ēlay*, "turn your face to me", based in the Qal imperative of *pānāh* (25:16; 69:16[17]; 86:16; 119:132), and "make your countenance to shine" (which appears thrice in a communal lament: 80:3[4], 7[8], 19[20]), or "make your countenance to shine upon your servant" (31:16[17]; 119:135), employing either *hā'ēr* or *hā'îrâ*, "cause to shine!", Hiphil imperative of *'ôr*, "to be or become light". The suppliant knows that even being innocent, his or her deliverance ultimately rests on God's demonstration of goodness, compassion, and mercy. And though God's compassion is known to be abundant, comprehending even the natural world, the suppliant does not take such blessing for granted, but rather finds it more appropriate to try to have it assured through explicit, direct, and contrite petition.

Besides *'al-tizkôr* and *'al-tiškah*, several other negative imperative expressions, similarly formed with *'al* + imperfect, occur in the prayers of lament, still appealing, in different ways, to God's benevolence. Some deal with the idea of rejection, in a form of indirect or mild complaint against God. Conscious of the fact that he is dealing with a very personal God, whose favour he desperately needs, the petitioner knows that his attitude matters before Yahweh. He cannot stand the idea of being rejected, or cast away, or sent empty-handed by his God (usual ways of referring to God's negative answer), for this would mean that in addition to his present plight all his fears would come true. Thus he prays, *'al-ta'az^obēnî*, "do not forsake me", with the Qal imperfect of the verb *'āzab*, "to leave, forsake" (27:9; 38:21[22]; 71:9,18; 119:8); *'al-tašlīkēnî*, "do not cast me away", Hiphil imperfect of *šālak*, "to throw, cast away" (51:11[13]; 71:9); *'al-titt^ošēnî*, "do not leave me", Qal imperfect of *nātaš*, "to leave, abandon; permit" (27:9); or *'al-tat^o'abdekā*, "do not put (or turn) your servant away", with the Hiphil imperfect of *nātāh* (27:9); the people too, in

a communal lament, would pray, *'al-tiznah*, "do not cast (us) off", with the Qal imperfect of *zānah*, "to cast off, reject" (44:23[24]).

Sometimes the petitions of the afflicted suppliants may suggest the idea that God is delaying in answering to their prayers, or that they simply want to prevent this from occurring. In such cases, their supplications, usually of the *'al* type, suggest the images of a God who has departed, who is far off, who is slow moving, or still, and silent, perhaps even hidden. Thus they pray, *šûbâ Yhwh*, "Return, O Yahweh!", Qal imperative of *šûb*, "to turn back, return" (6:4[5]; 80:14[15]; 90:13); *'al-tirhaq (mimmennî)*, "do not be far (from me)!", Qal imperfect of *rāhaq*, "to be or become far, distant" (22:11[12], 19[20]; 35:22; 38:21[22]; 71:12); *'al-taster pāneykâ mimmennî*, "do not hide your face from me" (27:9; 102:2[3]; 143:7), or "from your servant" (69:17[18]); *'al-tit'allam*, "do not hide yourself (from my supplication)", Hithpael imperfect of *'ālam*, "to hide" (55:1[2]); *'al-teh^oraš*, "do not be silent" (28:1; 35:22; 39:12[13]; 83:1[2]; 109:1), Qal imperfect of *hāraš*, "to be silent, speechless"; *'al-tišqōt*, "do not be still" (83:1[2]), Qal imperfect of *šāqat*, "to be quite, inactive"; *'al-t^oaḥar*, "do not tarry" (40:17[18]; 70:5[6]), Piel imperfect of *'āḥar*, "to delay, tarry". Here also belongs the recurrent appeal, *hûšâ*, "make haste!" (Qal imperative of *hûš*, "to haste, make haste"), found in the petitions, "hasten to me" (70:5[6]; 141:1) and "hasten to my help (*l^o'ezrātî*)" (22:19; 38:22[23]; 40:13[14]; 70:1[2]; 71:12).

Since all the verbs and expressions we have talked about usually occur in clusters, and displayed in pairs, it seems better to quote them together to illustrate their usage, as they (or most of them at least) appear in the text. The language, marked by a vivid and striking anthropomorphism, as far as God is concerned, is also pregnant with a passionate emotional tone, regarding the suppliant's troubled spirit. A few brief quotations follow:

Answer ('nh) me as I call, O God of my justice!
 From oppression give me relief (rhb);
 be gracious (hnn) to me and hear (šm') my prayer.
 (4:1[2])

Give year ('zn) to my words, O Yahweh!
 Give heed (byn) to my groaning.
 Listen (qšb) to the voice of my cry, my king and my God,
 for unto you I pray. (5:1-2[2-3])

See (r'h), O Yahweh! Be not silent (hrš)!
 O Lord, be not far (rhq) from me!
 Arouse yourself ('wr), and awake (qys) for my judgment,
 for my cause, O my God and my Lord! (35:22-23)

Do not forsake me ('zb), O Yahweh!
 O my God, be not far (rhq) from me!
 Make haste (hwš) to my help,
 O Lord, my salvation! (38:21-22[22-23])

Hear (šm') my prayer, O Yahweh!
 and give ear ('zn) to my cry;
 Do not be silent (hwš) at my tears,
 for I am a stranger with you,
 a sojourner, like all my fathers. (39:12[13])

Answer me ('nh), O Yahweh!, for your steadfast love is
 good;
 according to your abundant mercy, turn your face (pnh)
 unto me.
 Hide not (str) your face from your servant;
 for I am in distress, answer me ('nh) speedily.
 (69:16-17[17-18])

Hear (šm') my prayer, O Yahweh;
 let my cry come unto you!
 Do not hide (str) your face from me
 in the day of my distress!
 Incline (nth) your ear to me;
 answer me ('nh) speedily in the day when I call!
 (102:1-2[2-3])

In the following four verses (27:7,9; 143:1,7) as much as twelve imperatives
 are employed:

Hear (šm'), O Yahweh, my voice as I cry;
 and be gracious (hnn) to me and answer me ('nh).

Do not hide (str) your face from me;
 do not turn (nth) your servant away in anger,
 you who have been my help.

Do not leave me (*ntš*), do not forsake me (*'zb*),
O God of my salvation!

O Yahweh, hear (*šm'*) my prayer;
give ear (*'zn*) to my supplications!
In your faithfulness answer me (*'nh*),
in your justice!

Answer me (*'nh*) speedily, O Yahweh!
my spirit fails!
Do not hide (*str*) your face from me,
lest I be like those who go down to the pit.

An interesting play with *zākar*, "to remember", is found in 25:6-7:

Remember your compassion, O Yahweh, and your mercies,
for they have been from of old.
Do not remember the sins of my youth and my transgressions;
according to your mercy, remember me,
for your goodness' sake, O Yahweh!

The sense of God's delay is also apparent in the petitions based on the verbs *qîš*, "to awake", *'ûr*, "to arouse, awake", and *qûm*, "to rise up, arise, stand (up)": *hāqîšâ*, "awake!" (Hiphil imperative of *qîš*, 35:23; 44:23[24]; 59:5[6]); *'ûrâ*, "arouse!" (Qal imperative of *'ûr*, 7:6[7]; 44:23[24]; 59:4[5]); *hā'îrâ*, "stir up yourself!" (Hiphil imperative of *'ûr*, 35:23); *'ôr^orâ*, "cause to arise (your might)!" (Polel imperative of *'ûr*, 80:2[3]); *qûmâ*, "arise (O God)!" (Qal imperative of *qûm*, 35:2; 44:26[27]; 74:22; 82:8) or "arise, O Yahweh!" (3:7[8]; 7:6[7]; 9:19[20]; 10:12; and in 17:13). The imperatives of *qîš* and *'ûr* applied to God clearly imply that, for the desperate suppliant, he seems inactive as if he were asleep, therefore unable to bring about deliverance, unless he awakes himself, and for that to happen the suppliant raises his cry, his voice of lament. The words of Ps 44:23-24[24-25] can illustrate this fact:

Arouse yourself! Why do you sleep, O Yahweh?
Awake! Do not cast (us) off for ever!
Why do you hide your face?

Why do you forget our affliction and oppression?

This reference to Yahweh as being asleep may sound like an anthropomorphic cry--and it was certainly taken as such in later times--but if we see it in the light of the Canaanite mythology which lies behind it, it is more than a simple anthropomorphism. The call to awake seems to carry with it a concealed trace of bitterness, in so far as Yahweh is accused of being a god like Baal, who sleeps in the summer when the people need rain. The motif of a sleeping deity awakened by the human cry is also found in the Babylonian myth of Atra-hasis (already referred to in our second chapter), where it is recorded that the warrior god of the earth, Enlil, could not sleep because of the clamour of the oppressed humans (p. 32).

In the light of Ps 44:23[24] one might well conclude that the words of mockery attributed to the prophet Elijah against the prophets of Baal in 1 Kg 18:27 ("Cry aloud, for he is god; either he is musing . . . or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened".) could be an anachronism, or perhaps they should not be taken to be as ironical as they seem. After all, the portrayal of Yahweh in the psalms does include features which are common to Baal and other ancient deities. Ps 78:65-66 serves to make this point even clearer:

Then the Lord awoke (*qîs*) as from sleep,
like a strong man shouting because of wine;
and he put his adversaries to rout,
he put them to everlasting shame.

The interjective petition *qûmâ Yahweh!* "Arise, O Yahweh!" seems to have been a kind of ancient Israelite war cry, apparently associated with the Ark of the Covenant (cf. Nu 10:35). Also in one of the psalms of lament (cf. 80:1-2) it is still found in clear association with the Ark, as God is described as enthroned upon the cherubim. In the call to God to arise he is summoned to

fight for his people as in the old days of the Ark (cf. 44:9). The ancient image of a warrior God, poetically depicted as a strong hero (cf. 78:65-66), who suddenly arises with determination and bravely defeats his enemies, is closely associated with that of a judge, who also rises up in court to pronounce his sentence.⁵⁷ This double image certainly suits well the suppliant's concrete situation, as can be seen, for instance, in 35:1-3, where the juridical language is combined with that proper to warfare:

Plead (*ryb*), O Yahweh, with those who plead (*ryb*) with me;
 fight (*lhm*) against those who fight (*lhm*) against me!
 Take hold of shield and buckler,
 and arise (*qwm*) for my help!
 Draw the spear and the javelin
 to meet my pursuers!
 Say to my soul,
 "I am your deliverance!"

At times one of the images may be more apparent (cf. 9:19[20]; 74:22; 82:8; 10:12; 3:7[8]; 7:6[7]; 17:13), but still both of them are closely connected, as the ancient hero was also, *ipso facto*, a judge, a liberator of his people, whose deeds were normally understood as acts of judgment or justice. Such an appropriate depiction of God is not only effectively applied to the lamenters' present plight, but it is also projected by hope on the screen of the future, pointing to an age to come, when it shall again be made reality in view of the universal cry of the victims of injustice. This is attested in 82:8, where the "Arise!" petition is associated with God's advent to judge the earth, in the style of the Enthronement Psalms and Second Isaiah.

No matter which traditional image lies behind a particular passage, at the cry, "Arise, Yahweh!", God is urged to execute judgment by delivering his servant or his people from their oppressors, who are also, for this same reason, God's enemies. This is therefore a peculiar cry associated with the

Liberator God of Israel, who is thereby summoned to judge the wicked. Some other passages illustrate this point:

Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered;
 let those who hate him flee before him!
 As smoke is driven away, so drive them away;
 as wax melts before fire,
 let the wicked perish before God!
 But let the righteous be joyful;
 let them exult before God;
 let them be jubilant with joy!
 (68:1-3[2-4])

Because of the spoiling of the poor,
 and because of the groaning of the needy,
 "I will arise", says Yahweh. (12:5[6])

Arise, O Yahweh! Deliver me, O my God!
 for you do smite all my enemies on the cheek,
 you do break the teeth of the wicked.
 (3:7[8])

Arise, O Yahweh, in your anger,
 lift yourself up against the fury of my oppressors;
 awake, O my God, on my account,
 (for) a judgment you have appointed.
 (7:6[7])

As already suggested, the cry "Arise, O Yahweh!" in the lament psalms is an indirect petition against the enemies, for the intention that lies behind it is for Yahweh to inflict punishment against the enemies of his people or of an individual lamenter. In a more direct way Yahweh is usually asked to smite, to confront, to pursue, to slay, to confound, to put to shame, to kill the wicked. Further reference to petitions for the destruction of the enemies shall be seen in the final section.

Now we shall give some attention to the question: What is brought before Yahweh by the suppliant? In general terms, what is he drawing God's attention to? The answer is found when we consider the usual objects of the verbal expressions we have been dealing with. In the first place, as we turn to

petitions like "Listen to *me!*", "Answer *me!*", "Be gracious to *me!*", "Turn to *me!*", "Turn your face to *me!*", "Incline your ear to *me!*", "Hide not your face from *me!*", etc., which are so abundant, it becomes obvious that the predominant object is the lamenter himself, as a person in trouble and despair, coming before the very presence of Yahweh, addressed as another person. After all, it is to him and his trouble that God's attention is called. However, very often the verbs used, particularly those of an "auditive" nature, precede a few objects which serve to name and characterize the oral and living experience of the suppliant in his "seeking of God's face", so that an audience, a special encounter may take place between him and his God.

The term most commonly employed to name that which the suppliant presents or brings before his God is *t°pillâ*, universally translated as "prayer". It is used in Ps 17:1, in the petition, "Give ear to my prayer!" (cf. also 55:1[2]; 86:6), and found elsewhere in petitions like "Hear my prayer!" (4:1[2]; 39:12[13]; 54:2[4]; 84:8[9]; 102:1[2]; 143:1), "Let my prayer come before you" (88:2[3]), "Let my prayer be set forth before you" (141:2), "In the morning my prayer comes before you" (88:13[14]), "He has listened to the voice of my prayer" (66:19), "He has not rejected my prayer" (66:20), "He regards the prayer of the destitute", "He does not despise their prayer" (102:17[18]), etc.

T°pillâ is used thirty-two times in the Psalter, including the five times it appears in psalm titles (17; 86; 90; 102; 142) and once in the plural, in the compiler's annotation at the end of Ps 72. Since the English vocable "prayer" is quite familiar to us in its modern usage, which evokes a variety of personal religious practices or liturgical acts, one is left to wonder what *t°pillâ* actually meant for the ancient Israelite worshipping community. Perhaps such meaning could be found in the use of the word's root and in its close literary context,

i.e., the associated terms that are equally employed to summarize the suppliant's cultic experience of "seeking Yahweh's face", usually found in parallelistic display.

Behind the Hebrew term *ṭ^opillâ* (seventy-seven times in the Old Testament, thirty-two in the psalms) lies the root *pll*. As a verb (*pālal*) it is used four times in the Old Testament in the Piel, meaning "to judge" or "mediate" (Gn 48:11; 1 Sam 2:25; Ps 106:30; Ez 16:52), and eighty times in the Hithpael, meaning "to pray" (three times in the psalms).

Following the suggestion of Welhausen,⁵⁸ many have connected *hitpallēl* with the Arabic *falla*, "to notch [the edge of a sword or of anything],"⁵⁹ and explained its original meaning as being "to cut or wound oneself", hence "to perform ritual incision", pointing to an ancient religious custom of gashing oneself with swords or knives to gain the attention and favour of a deity. An example of this practice is found in 1 Kg 18:28, regarding the prophets of the Canaanite god Baal, and it has been pointed out that other examples seem suggested in 1 Kg 10:41 and Zech 13:6. The idea is parallel to that of Robertson Smith,⁶⁰ who suggested that "the Syriac *'etkaššap*, literally 'to cut oneself' came to mean 'to make supplication' because shedding one's blood was a recognized way of recommending oneself to God's notice."⁶¹

Another theory was advanced by K. Ahrens,⁶² according to which the roots *pll* and *npl* are developments of the same biliteral stem meaning "to fall". From this point of view, "to pray" would mean something like "to cast oneself down (before God)", with clear semantic association with *hištaḥawâ*, "to crouch" or "prostrate", which has itself come to mean "to worship".

It has to be conceded, however, that if the original meaning of *hitpallēl* was

either "to perform ritual incision" or "to cast oneself down (before God)", such meaning has been completely lost from the Hebrew of the Old Testament. In spite of the fact that the verb *hitpallēl* and its derived noun *t^opillâ* in later times came to be apparently neutral in meaning, and hence close to the English forms "to pray" and "prayer" which translate them, it seems reasonable to believe that the meaning of *hitpallēl* in the Old Testament must be explained in the light of the Piel of *pālāl*, *pillēl*, "to mediate, judge, arbitrate, intervene". In consequence, *t^opillâ*, particularly when used in connection with the psalms of lament of the individual, must have been a technical term for the lamenter's appeal before Yahweh in the sanctuary, as part of a cultic rite of juridical nature.

Pillēl can be found associated with *hitpallēl*. This happens, for instance, in 1 Sam 2:25, where Eli admonishes his corrupt sons:

If a man sins against a man, God will *mediate* [Piel] for him; but if a man sins against Yahweh, who can *intercede* [Hithpael] for him? (RSV)

Johansson,⁶³ for whom the use of *pll* proves a juridical bases for *hitpallēl*, offers this suggestive translation of the verse above quoted:

If a man sins against another, God can decide the affair, but if a man sins against Yahweh, who can then come forward as arbitrator?

RSV has *intercede* for *hitpallēl*, which is a common rendering, but to pray is not always to intercede. Johansson's translation reflects better the connection of Piel and Hithpael, but still "to make oneself mediator (or arbitrator)" is not all that can be said of *hitpallēl*. As conceded by Ap-Thomas,⁶⁴ *hitpallēl* could also mean "to apply for mediation", and this is precisely the meaning that seems to correspond to its usage in the lament psalms. It follows that *t^opillâ* or "prayer"

here can be explained, as already suggested, as "a case for arbitration" or "a matter of judgment", "a cause" presented before Yahweh, the just Judge of the poor and oppressed. As a matter of fact, Eli's words in 1 Sam 2:25 could be pointing to a cultic, juridical institution, probably the same alluded to in Dt 17:8-11, which seems to have provided the *Sitz im Leben* for a good number of the extant individual psalms of lament in the Psalter.

Ps 17 presents in v. 1 two other terms which, in parallelism with *t^opillâ*, have the same function and perhaps share in the same technical sense as above suggested:

Hear, O Yahweh, (my) *şedeq*!
 Listen to my *rinnâ*!
 Give ear to my *t^opillâ*!

Though *şedeq* in stich *a* is liable to different interpretations and emendations, as seen in our Textual Notes section (p. 139), it is very likely that here it stands for "a plea for justice" (RSV), and this goes well in accord with our suggested sense for *t^opillâ*. As for *rinnâ*, which ordinarily signifies "a ringing cry", besides being used to designate a cry for joy, especially of praise to Yahweh (Is 35:10; 51:11; Ps 107:22; 118:15; etc.), it is also several times, like in 17:1, used to express an entreaty to Yahweh. Though in such a context it is usually explained as a "shrill cry for help", the term may have acquired a technical sense of prayer or lament (cf. 1 Kg 8:28 = 2 Chr 6:19; Jer 7:16; 11:14; Ps 61:1[2]; 88:2[3]; 106:44; 119:169; 142:6[7]; Jer 14:12). In most of these passages (with the exception of the last four), *rinnâ* is used in association with *t^opillâ*, standing in parallelism to it in 17:1; 61:1[2]; and 88:2[3]. With an apparent technical sense for prayer or lament *rinnâ* is found in the Psalter in the following clauses:

Hear my cry! (61:1[2])
 Listen to my cry! (17:1; 142:6[7])
 Incline your ear to my cry! (88:2[3])
 Let my cry come near before you! (119:169)
 He heard their cry. (106:44)

Other stems for "cry" are also found in the Psalter, namely:

1) the verb *zā'aq*, "to cry, cry out", used five times in the phrase "I (or they) cried unto Yahweh" (22:5[6]; 107:13,19; 142:1[2]; 5:6);

2) the verb *šā'aq*, "to cry, cry out" (34:17[18]; 77:1[2]; 88:1[2]; 107:6,28), and its derived noun *šē'āqâ*, referring to the cry of the poor (*'a^aniyyim* [Kethib]) in 9:12[13];

3) the noun *'a^anāqâ*, from *'ānaq*, "to cry, groan", referring to the groans of the needy (*'e^abyôn*) and the prisoner (*'ā^asîr*) in 12:5[6]; 79:11; 102:20[21];

4) the noun *'a^anāḥâ*, "groaning, sighing", from *'ānah*, "to groan, sigh", used basically in a descriptive way, as expression of the suppliant's sorrow and pain (6:6[7]; 31:10[11]; 38:9[10]; 102:5[6]);

5) and more abundantly, used mostly perhaps in a technical sense, the root *šw'*, used sixteen times in the psalms: nine as a verb, *šāwa'*, "to cry out for help" in the Piel (18:6[7], 41[42]; 22:24[25]; 28:2; 30:2[3]; 31:22[23]; 72:12; 88:13[14]; 119:147), and seven times as a noun, i.e., once as *šewa'* (5:2[3]) and six times as *šaw'â* (18:6[7]; 34:15[16]; 39:12[13]; 40:1[2]; 102:1[2]; 145:19).

The roots *pll* (for "prayer" and "to pray") and *šw'* (for "cry for help" or "to cry for help") are sometimes used together in parallelism, as for instance in 39:12[13], "Hear my prayer, O Yahweh, and give ear to my cry", and 5:2[3], "Listen to the voice of my cry, my king and my God, for to you I pray" (cf. 102:1[2] and 88:13[14]). In all of these passages they are objects of the verbs

"to hear" (*šāma'*), "give ear" (*'āzan*), and "listen" (*qāšab*).

The root *šw'* also occurs in parallelism with *qāra'*, "to call" (18:6[7]), a verb largely used in reference to those who seek God for help in the Psalter (fifty-five times), mostly found in the expressions, "cry unto Yahweh", "call upon Yahweh", and the like. When used intransitively, which happens very often, it expresses more clearly the technical sense of "to cry", although perhaps reflecting a more conscious process (the liturgical crying of someone who expects to be heard and helped) than the unconscious one (like the crying of agony and pain of one wounded), which may remotely lie behind the "cry" terminology. For "to cry to Yahweh", already in early times, as seen for instance in Ex 22:21-27; Dt 15:7-9; 24:14-15, seemed to have a technical, cultic-juridical sense, implying the formal presentation of a lament in the sanctuary, "before Yahweh".

Another group of words which are often used in the Psalter to designate what God is requested to hear, to listen to, to give ear to, or not to hide himself from, is that derived from *hānan*, "to show favour, be gracious", namely *t^ohinnâ*, "supplication" (6:9[10]; 55:1[2]; 119:170), and *tah^anûn*, only used in the plural, "supplications", once in the feminine, *tah^anûnôt*, and seven times in the masculine, *tah^anûnîm*. Twice *t^ohinnâ* is parallel to *t^opillâ* (6:9[10]; 55:1[2]), and so *tah^anûn* (143:1; 86:6), which is also twice associated with *b^ošaww^o'î*, "in my crying". In the same way in which *t^opillâ* designates that which is presented to Yahweh for mediation or judgment, or an application for arbitration, *t^ohinnâ* or *tah^anûn* represents a request for favour, an appeal for God's gracious intervention (in judgment). The plural forms could also be representing the sum of particular requests embedded in a prayer or cultic cry, or perhaps multiple recitations of the same prayer or lament by the suppliant. With one

or two exceptions (143:1; 116:1 [?]), they are found in the phrase *qôl tah^anûnāy* (once *tah^anûnô^{tāy}*), "the voice of my supplications". The term *qôl* here, as well as in other phrases like "the voice of my prayer" (66:19), "the voice of my cry" (5:2[3]), "the voice of my groaning" (102:5[6]), "the voice of my weeping" (6:8[9]), and perhaps in the phrase, "I cry (or cried) with my voice" (3:4[5]; 27:7; 77:1[2]; 142:1[2]), may have in later times come to have a mere expletive function, but quite certainly it would have previously designated a "loud sound", i.e., the loud sound of my prayer, my cry, my supplication, etc. Along with all the cry motif terminology, such usage of *qôl* seems reminiscent of the primitive idea that the attention of a sleeping or otherwise unattentive deity could be secured by the loud sound of a prayer.

When *qôl* is used by itself in the absolute in the phrase "hear (or "heard") my voice" (18:6[7]; 55:17[18]; 64:1[2]; 116:1; 119:149; 130:2; 141:1) it can be taken in the sense of "lament" or "cry", and appears in parallelism with *t^apillâ* (141:1,2); *tah^anûnîm* (116:1) or *qôl tah^anûnîm* (130:2); *šāw'â* (18:6[7]); and *šî^ah*, "complaint" (64:1[2], or "to complain" (55:17[18])). The verb *šî^ah*, also meaning "to muse, meditate", occurs twenty times in the Old Testament, always in poetic texts, but it is mostly found in the Psalter (fourteen times). Along with its corresponding noun, *šî^ah* (55:2[3]; 64:1[2]; 102 [title]; 104:34; 142:2[3]), it also serves to designate or characterize what is otherwise known as cry, prayer, or supplication in the cultic realm.

Psalms 17:6 has still another expression to add to those we have already seen, i.e., *'imrâ*, "word, speech, utterance": ". . . incline your ear to me, hear my word!" In other two instances, *'ômer*, from the same root, *'mr*, and with the same meaning, is employed. They are Ps 54:2[4], where *'imrê^{pî}* "the words of my mouth" is parallel to *t^apillâ*, and 5:1[2], where *'amāray*, "my words", is

parallel to *h^agîgî*, "my groaning", and also to *šaw'î*, "my cry", and *'etpallāl*, "I pray", in verse 2[3]. Thus *'imrâ/ōmer* can be said to belong to the same category of those terms which are here characterized by their cultic usage, and as such "my word" could signify "my word of lament", or simply stand for "my cry", "my lament", or "my prayer".

3.2.3. Requesting God's Intervention

Besides the expressions that denote the psalmists' passionate pleading for God's attention and mercy, we find a large number of others which convey a request for God's intervention of some sort. The intervention sought, whatever the problem may be, is an act of Yahweh's salvation or deliverance, or, to use another expression, of God's liberation, either personal or communal. But the terminology is vast, and may be represented in a varied way within one single psalm. There is no point in being exhaustive here. It will suffice, for the sake of our analysis, to have a brief look at most of the relevant terms (mainly verbs) arbitrarily grouped in the following categories: terms that represent requests for protection, for salvation or deliverance, for healing, and for forgiveness, in spite of the fact that the concept of salvation or deliverance comprehends all these categories.

Through his actions in history, and especially in the Israelite cultus, on behalf of his afflicted people, Yahweh earned the reputation of being their "refuge" (*maḥseh*), a fact which is plentifully acknowledged by the psalmists (cf. 14:6; 46:1[2]; 61:3[4]; 62:7[8], 8[8]; 71:7; 73:28; 91:2,9; 94:22; 142:5[6]), who do not hesitate to come before Yahweh for protection or refuge (verb *ḥāsāh*) in times of trouble (7:1[2]; 11:1; 16:1; 25:20; 31:1[2]; 37:40; 57:1[2]; 64:10[11]; 71:1; 141:8; 142:2). The author of Ps 17 (v. 7) puts himself amongst the *ḥōsîm*, "those who seek refuge [in Yahweh]" (cf. 5:11[12]; 18:30[31]; 31:19[20], for it is

known that "blessed are all who take refuge in him" (2:12; cf. 34:9), and none of his servants "who take refuge in him will be held guilty" (34:22[23]). This seems to be an allusion to the ordeal that many accused people are believed to have gone through in the sanctuary, quite often, if not always, with their lives on the verge of doom, their deliverance depending solely on Yahweh's final verdict.

Again the suppliant's longing for protection is expressed, in 17:8, in highly poetic language, drawing on traditionally well known figures of speech:

Keep me (*šôm^orēnî*) as the apple of your eye;
hide me (*tastîrēnî*) in the shadow of your wings.

In the Psalter the verb *šāmar*, "to keep, preserve", is often used to denote Yahweh's protecting action on behalf of his servants (12:7[8]; 41:2[3]; 121:7), the participle of which (*šômēr*) serves to portray him as the *keeper* of those who love him (145:20), the *keeper* of the sojourners (*gērîm*; 146:9), the *keeper* of the simple (*p^otā'îm*; 116:6), the *keeper* of Israel (121:4), the *keeper* of the life ("soul", "bones") of his faithful ones (*h^asîdîm*; 97:10) and the righteous (*šaddîq*; 34:20[21]), and the ever attentive *keeper* of each faithful worshipper on his journey back home (121:3,5). Thus they cry to Yahweh to be kept (using the imperative of *šāmar*) from the hands and snares of the wicked (140:4[5]; 141:9), to have their lives kept and protected (16:1; 25:20; 86:2). As for the phrase "the apple of your eye", reference has already been made to it in the Textual Notes section (p. 144).

God's protection is also requested through the use of the Hiphil imperfect of *sātar*, "to hide", as seen in 17:8 (quoted above), in parallelism with *šāmar*, and 64:2[3], "hide me from the secret plots of the wicked, from the scheming of evildoers". The suppliant seeks to be hidden in Yahweh's shelter (*sukkâ*) or

in the hiding place (*sēter*) of his presence, or his tent, *'ōhel* (27:5; 31:20[21]), which might be an allusion to his sanctuary,⁶⁵ which was believed to offer a right of asylum. Yahweh himself is confessed to be the "hiding place" (*sēter*) of those in affliction ("You are my hiding place", 32:7; 119:114). And again God's protective presence and power is denoted by an expressive metaphor in 61:4[5], "I will take refuge in the hiding place of your wings" (cf. 91:4), which is equivalent to that of 17:8b, *šēl k^onāpeykâ*, "the shadow of your wings" (cf. 36:7[8]; 57:1[2]; 63:7[8]). This metaphor is either suggested by the watchful care of a mother bird, possibly in connection with the fact that Yahweh is depicted in the Old Testament as an eagle (Dt 32:11; Hab 3:3-4; cf. also Ex 19:4 and the words of Jesus in Mt 23:37),⁶⁶ or most probably by the wings of the cherubim above the Ark of the Covenant, as admitted by Kraus and Weiser.⁶⁷ Less probable is the suggestion that this word-picture is associated with the winged solar disc, well known in Egypt and Mesopotamia.⁶⁸ As Anderson points out, "This origin of the word-picture is not impossible, but it is unlikely that the original significance, whatever it might have been, was retained throughout the history of this phrase".⁶⁹

In 27:5 ("He shall hide me in the day of trouble") and 31:20[21] *špn*, "to hide", is used in parallelism with *str*. At least two other major verbs associated with the idea of protection are used by the psalmists in their petitions. One of them is *nāsar*, "to watch, keep, preserve", found in the petitions, "preserve my life from dread of the enemy" (64:1[2]), "preserve me from the violent man" (140:1[2]; 4[5]), "let my integrity and uprightness preserve me" (25:21), and "let your steadfast love and your truth continually preserve me" (40:11[12]), and in expressions of confidence in God's protective care (12:7[8]; 32:7; 31:23[24]). The other verb is *šāgab*, "to be high", which in the Piel means "to set securely on high, protect". It occurs in the petitions, "O

God, set me on high" (69:29[30]), "protect me from those who rise up against me" (59:1[2]), and in some other passages (20:1[2]; 91:14; 107:41; cf. Is 9:10[11]), which include the affirmation that "he [Yahweh] protects the poor (*'ebyôn*) from affliction" (107:41), stressing the social class of perhaps most of the people who used to entrust themselves to Yahweh's protection in the sanctuary against the violence of their oppressors. A noun derived from the verb *sāqab*, *mišgāb*, "secure height, refuge", is employed thirteen times in the psalms (four times elsewhere, including 2 Sam 22:3 = Ps 18:2[3]) applied to God as a high refuge for the troubled suppliants (9:9[10], 9[10]; 18:2[3]; 46:7[8], 11[12]; 48:3[4]; 59:9[10], 16[17], 17[18]; 62:2[3], 6[7]; 94:22; 144:2), or in the words of 9:9[10],

"Yahweh shall be a refuge (*mišgāb*) for the oppressed (*dāk*),
a refuge (*mišgāb*) in times of distress".

It seems clear that all this abundant terminology dealing with the idea of refuge and protection in the psalms related to Yahweh is linked with the function of the sanctuary as some sort of asylum for one who was pursued, or the place where an unjustly accused man could be acquitted by Yahweh through the intermediacy of priests or other cult officials. The same seems to be valid for the petitions for "help", "salvation", "deliverance", so widely echoed in the psalms of lament through the use of a number of different terms.

Thus, when in distress, the poor, humble and pious members of the Israelite community seek Yahweh or Yahweh's face through the presentation of their prayers of lament in the sanctuary, as their sole or ultimate source of "help", i.e., salvation or deliverance. Such confidence in God, who "sends his help from the sanctuary" (20:2[3]) is expressed in the use of *'ēzer*, "help, succour", mostly found in sentences such as, "he [Yahweh] is our *help* and our

shield" (33:20), "you [God] are my *help* and my deliverer" (70:5[6]), "my *help* comes from Yahweh" (121:2), etc. Expressions using the participle of 'āzar, "to help, succour", are also significant. Yahweh is depicted as the 'ôzēr, the "helper" of the poor and the fatherless (10:14), to whom those with their lives in danger are ready to pray, "Yahweh, be you my helper!" (30:10[11]), or to confess, "Behold, God is my helper!" (54:4[6]). Therefore it is not surprising that ardent pleadings in the imperative are also found, as an anguished suppliant laconically cries, "help me!" (119:86), or in a more extended plea, "Help me, O Yahweh my God!" (109:26). The people too, in a communal lament, raise their cry, "Help us, O God of our salvation!" (79:9), or, using the feminine noun 'ezrâ, "help" (fourteen times in the Psalter and twelve times elsewhere), entreat, "Give us help from trouble" (60:11[13]; 108:12[13]). Yahweh is held as a very present help ('ezrâ) in troubled situations or distresses (šārôt; 46:1[2]), and that is why afflicted devotees in need of urgent assistance or deliverance come to him crying, "Arise for my (or our) help!" (35:2; 44:26[27]), or "Make haste to help me!" (38:22[23]; 70:1[2]; 22:19; 40:13[14]; 71:12). And it is the reality and effectiveness of God's merciful intervention that make them declare or confess that Yahweh is or has been their help (27:9; 40:17[18]; 63:7[8]), and recognize how crucial Yahweh's support can be, as the suppliant of Ps 94 does, by saying: "Unless Yahweh had been my help, my soul would soon have dwelt in the land of silence" (94:17), which means that the suppliant was delivered by Yahweh from a severe trial that had endangered his very life.

Although, as we have said, the request for help is a plea for salvation or deliverance, the idea of salvation is more directly and predominantly expressed in the psalms through the root *yš'*, which has already been introduced in v. 7 of Ps 17:

Wondrously show your steadfast love,
 O saviour (*môšî'a'*) of those who seek refuge (in you)
 from those who rise up against your right hand!

The epithet *môšî'a'* (Hiphil participle of *yš'*) when applied to Yahweh in the Old Testament is usually rendered as "saviour", but this term is not to be understood in the spiritual sense that became predominant in the times of the New Testament. It is rather to be taken as a technical term for "deliverer", or even "liberator". This can be clearly illustrated by its usage as applied to the Judges, the ancient heroes of the tribal Israel, who were raised to deliver the people from the hands of their enemies: "And when the people of Israel cried to Yahweh, Yahweh raised up a liberator (*môšî'a'*) for the people of Israel, who delivered them . . ." (Ju 3:9; cf. 3:15; 2 Kg 13:5; Ne 9:27), though the true saviour of Israel was always Yahweh himself, who acted through the hands of the Judges (cf. Ju 6:36). As expected, the *Moshia's* liberating action takes place in cases of national or individual oppression and spoliation (Dt 28:29,31), of calamities and distresses (1 Sam 10:9); and any person who happens to deliver somebody from trouble, like for instance an individual who delivers a young woman who cries when being raped, is rightfully called *Moshia* (Dt 22:27). As for Yahweh, his condition as *Moshia* is determined by his covenant relationship with Israel, and his steadfast love (*hesed*) or loyalty to the terms of such covenant is shown as he becomes the *Moshia* of the distressed who seeks refuge in him.

The root *yš'* occurs 136 times in the Book of Psalms: fifty-seven times as a verb, *yāša'* (in the Hiphil), "to save, deliver, rescue", and seventy-nine as a noun (twenty times as *yēša'*; forty-five as *yōšû'â*; thirteen as *tōšû'â*; and once as *môšā'ôṭ*). The noun *yēša'* is mainly found in the phrase, "The God of my (our) salvation" (which corresponds in meaning to "my (our) saviour God"), and

others of close similarity (18:46[47]; 24:5; 25:5; 27:9; 65:5[6]; 79:9; 85:4[5]; 95:1; 18:2[3], 35[36]), which are sometimes formed with $y^{\circ}\check{s}\acute{u}'\hat{a}$ (68:19[20]; 88:1[2]; 89:26[27]; 62:2[3], 6[7]) and $t^{\circ}\check{s}\acute{u}'\hat{a}$ (38:22[23]; 51:14[16]). The psalmists are convicted that $y^{\circ}\check{s}\acute{u}'\hat{a}$ belongs to Yahweh (3:8[9]), i.e., he is the ultimate source and cause of deliverance, and such fact is germane to what is known of his acts, it springs forth from his very nature and purpose in history. In general terms, it can be said that all acts of deliverance or liberation from injustice and life-threatening adversity throughout history on behalf of the weak, the poor, the oppressed, are to be ultimately credited to Yahweh. Whether or not a human intermediary is acknowledged in the process, Yahweh is the one who shows, who makes known, who commands deliverance among his people, who works deliverance in the midst of the earth (74:12; 91:16; 96:2; 98:2; 44:4[5]; 62:1[2]). Human strength and military power cannot be trusted as effective means for bringing about salvation or deliverance apart from Yahweh (33:16,17; 96:2; 98:2; 44:4[5]; 62:1[2]). Thus Ps 33:16,17 reads:

A king is not saved ($y\check{s}'$) by his great army;
 a warrior is not delivered by his great strength.
 The war horse is a vain hope for deliverance ($t^{\circ}\check{s}\acute{u}'\hat{a}$),
 and by its great might it cannot save.

It is a well established fact that "it is he [Yahweh] who grants salvation to the kings" (144:10), and accordingly the sages too have left us a clear statement on the issue:

The horse is made ready for the day of battle,
 but the liberating victory ($t^{\circ}\check{s}\acute{u}'\hat{a}$) belongs to Yahweh.
 (Pr 21:31)

Perhaps no other text can be clearer and more elaborate on this theme than Ps 146, apparently a congregational hymn. It brings a warning not to place (unreserved) trust in "princes" ($n^{\circ}\underline{d}\acute{i}\underline{b}\acute{i}m$), i.e., the rich and powerful, or in

any human being, for each one is no more than a mortal man, in whom there is no *tšû'â* (vv. 3-4), but to reckon as happy he whose help and hope is in Yahweh his God (v. 5). The psalmist then points to the reasons for this and outlines Yahweh's saving deeds on behalf of the poor, the weak, the oppressed, by reason of which he is to be praised (vv. 1,2,10): Yahweh is the creator of all things, is he who keeps his covenant fidelity for ever, who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry, sets the prisoners free, opens the eyes of the blind, lifts up those who are bowed down, loves the just or righteous, watches over the sojourners, upholds the widow and the fatherless, and brings to ruin the wicked, the oppressor of the poor (vv. 6-9).

It is therefore inspired by this knowledge and compelled by their troubles that distressed suppliants and the worshipping community come confidently before Yahweh with this cry in their lips, "Save me (*hôšî'ênî*), O my God!" (3:7[8]; cf. 6:4[5]; 7:1[2]; 12:1[2]; 20:9[10]; 22:21[22]; 31:16[17]; 54:1[3]; 59:2[3]; 69:1[2]; 71:2; 86:2,16; 108:6[7]; 109:26; 119:94,146), or "Save us (*hôšî'ênû*), O Yahweh our God!" (106:47; cf. 28:9; 60:5[7]; 118:25). The deliverance they long and hope for comes from Yahweh (119:123,166, 174) and in it they finally rejoice, once it has been effected (9:14[15]; 13:5[6]; 20:5[6]; 35:9; 118:15), giving public testimony of their liberating experience before the congregation on a suitable occasion (40:10[11]; 71:15) at the central sanctuary.

In 17:13 we have a petition which makes use of another root to express the concept of deliverance, "Deliver (*pall'âtâ*) my life from the wicked with your sword". Using the same imperative form of the verb *pālāt*, "to escape", which is mostly used in the Piel with a causative meaning, "to rescue, bring into security, deliver" (found seventeen times in the Psalter and eight times

elsewhere), other psalmists pray, "Deliver me in your justice!" (31:1[2]), "Deliver me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust and cruel man" (71:4). And the divine intermediary beings who form Yahweh's heavenly court (the *'ēlōhîm*) are warned by Yahweh as he presides over the divine council, "Rescue (*pall^otâ*) the poor (*dal*) and the needy (*'ēbyôn*); deliver (*nsl*) them from the hand of the wicked" (82:4). This verse is one of the clearest in showing what "deliverance", so often spoken of by the psalmists, is all about. The Piel imperfect with imperative force is also used by the psalmists in their petitions, "From deceitful and unjust men deliver me!" (43:1); "In your justice deliver me (*nsl*) and rescue me (*plt*), incline your ear to me and save me (*yš'*)" (71:2). Either as an expression of confidence or gratitude, Yahweh is accordingly called *m^opall^otâ*, "my deliverer", by those who seek him in trouble or praise him for his deliverance (2 Sam 22:2 = Ps 18:2[3]; 18:48[49]; 40:17[18]; 70:5[6]; 144:2).

As can be noticed in our quotations of 82:4 and 71:2, *nsl* is parallel to *plt*, and among the Hebrew roots for deliverance it is the most abundantly employed throughout the Old Testament (212 times) and the Psalter in particular (fourty-five times). The verb *nāsal* is rendered as "to strip, spoil, plunder" (Piel); "deliver oneself, be delivered" (Niphal); "snatch away, deliver" (Hiphil). It is mostly employed in the Hiphil (190 times), the basic meaning of which can be well illustrated, for example, in the case of a prey being "delivered" or "snatched away" from the mouth of wild beasts (1 Sam 17:35; Am 3:12; Ez 34:10). Very often this is the situation in which the psalmists see themselves, in a metaphoric way, i.e., as victims of the wicked, their enemies, usually depicted as wild animals who prey on the poor and the weak. It is then from such enemies and the trouble that they occasion, often involving spoliation, violence, and threat to life, that the psalmists seek Yahweh's

deliverance. As the wicked prey on the poor, the poor pray to Yahweh their God, "Deliver me (*ḥaṣṣîlênî*), O Yahweh, from my enemies" (143:9). Similar petitions with the imperative Hiphil of *nāṣal* are plentifully attested in the Psalter (7:1[2]; 22:20[21]; 25:20; 31:2[3], 15[16]; 59:1[2], 2[3]; 69:14[15]; 82:4; 109:21; 120:2; 142:6[7]; 143:9; 144:7,11), including a few petitions for deliverance from sin and guilt (39:8[9]; 51:14[16]; 79:9; 119:170?). Other verbal forms are also employed, such as the imperfect, *taṣṣîlênî* (cf. 71:2), and twice the infinitive, *l^eḥaṣṣîlênî*, "Be pleased, O Yahweh, to deliver me" (40:13[14]), "Make haste, O God, to deliver me" (70:1[2]). Yahweh is called *maṣṣîl 'ānî*, "the deliverer of the poor" (35:10).

Some petitions for deliverance may make use of the verb *ḥālaṣ* (I), "to draw off (or out), withdraw", which most often occurs in the Piel, meaning "to rescue, deliver" (ten times in the Psalms, where the Niphal occurs twice meaning "to be delivered, or rescued"). Three imperative requests (Piel) are found, "Return, O Yahweh, deliver (*ḥall^eṣâ*) my life" (6:4[5]); "Deliver me (*ḥall^eṣênî*), O Yahweh, from the evil man" (140:1[2]); "Consider my affliction and deliver me (*ḥall^eṣênî*)" (119:153).

The petition for deliverance recorded in 116:4, "O Yahweh, I beseech you, deliver (*mall^etâ*) my life", employs the imperative of *mālaṭ*, "to slip away, escape", found mostly in the Piel with a causative meaning, "to let escape, deliver, save" (33:17; 41:1[2]; 89:48[49]; 107:20). This verb occurs eight times in the Psalter, three of them being in the Niphal (22:5[6]; 124:7,7).

Still in this group we have the verb *pādāh*, "to redeem, ransom, deliver". It is used to denote the redemption of a slave or captive (cf. Ex 21:8) and the ransom of a person or animal from death, either by a substitute or the payment of money (cf. Ex 13:13,15; Nu 18:15,16). In a derived, figurative sense,

it denotes the deliverance from any kind of affliction, trouble, or from death, which is the usual case in the psalms, where this verb occurs twelve times along with its related nouns, *p^odûṭ* (119:9; 130:7) and *pidyôn* (49:8[9]), both meaning "redemption" or "deliverance".

The Qal imperative of *pādāh* is the basis of the following petitions:

Deliver me and be gracious to me (26:11).
 Deliver me because of my enemies (69:18[19]).
 Deliver me from man's oppression (119:134).
 Deliver Israel from all his troubles (25:22).
 Deliver us because of your steadfast love (44:26[27]).

Redemption or deliverance here is sought by the suppliant from troubles, enemies, and oppression, and the confidence in God's mercy relies on his covenant loyalty.

In the petitions, "Draw near to me, redeem me (*g^oālā*)"⁷⁰ (69:18[19]), and "Plead my cause and redeem me (*g^oālēnā*)" (119:154), the psalmists make use of the verb *gā'al*, "to redeem, act as a kinsman", which we had the opportunity to refer to in our study on the cry of Israel in Egypt (p. 65). The original meaning of this verb might have been "to protect".⁷¹ Its use in the Old Testament has to do with the restoration of a previous, original relationship, but in the Psalter, where it occurs eleven times, usually in a figurative sense, like *pādāh* it denotes deliverance from trouble and afflictions, either applied to individuals or the nation. As in other parts of the Old Testament, Yahweh is also called *gô'el* in the psalms (19:14[15]; 78:35; 103:4). This participle and other forms of *gā'al* imply a special personal relationship between God and those whom he redeems or delivers, usually being the poor, the oppressed, the captive, the orphan, the widow, etc.

The verb *yāsā'*, "to go out, come out", is also used in petitions for

deliverance in the psalms, in its causative form (Hiphil), meaning "to bring out": "Bring me out (*hōṣî'ēnî*) of my distresses" (25:17; cf. 107:28; 143:11); "Bring my life out of prison" (142:7[8]).

Also the verbs proper to the juridical realm are well suited for being used in requests for deliverance. The verb *šāpat* means "to judge, govern", but to judge is both "to defend, deliver" (normally the poor, the weak, the needy; cf. 82:3; 72:4), and "to avenge, punish" (the wicked oppressor), as seen in 75:7[8]. Thus afflicted individuals pray, "Judge me, O Yahweh!" (7:8[9]; 26:1; 35:24); "Judge me, O God, and plead my cause" (43:1). Yahweh is celebrated as the Judge (*šōpēṭ*) of the earth (94:2; 58:11), and as such his deeds of liberation are to be seen beyond the boundaries of Israel, among all his creatures.

Appeals in the psalms with the use of *rîb*, "to strive, contend", which in many cases is used in the sense of "conducting a legal case or suit", also have the tone of pleadings for deliverance. For at least this is what the suppliant ultimately seeks from Yahweh when he prays, "Contend with those who contend with me, O Yahweh!" (35:1); "Plead my cause and deliver me" (119:154).

Perhaps we should include here the petitions for restoration, using the verb *šûb*, "to turn back, return", which in the Hiphil means, "to cause to return, bring back", and can sometimes be rendered "to recover, to rescue". Four times in two community lament psalms we find these petitions, using both the Hiphil, "Restore us (*h^ašîbēnû*), O God!" (80:3[4], 7[8], 19[20]), and the Qal imperative, "Restore us (*šûbēnû*), O God of our salvation" (85:4[5]). These prayers may be interpreted either as petitions for deliverance/restoration from exile, or more probably the restoration of the nation's fortune in general.⁷² Twice, however, it is the individual who prays, "Restore (*hāšîbâ*) to me the joy

of my salvation" (51:12[14]), i.e., let me once more experience your deliverance, which in this case might be from sin and its consequences, perhaps illness; "Rescue my life from their ravages" (35:17), i.e., from the destructive deeds of his enemies, who accuse him falsely.

The use of *rāpā*, "to heal", in the psalms can be either objective, referring to sickness, or figurative, as in 60:2[4], where Yahweh is asked to heal the breaches of the land, or 147:3, where he is acclaimed as he who heals the brokenhearted (although even here sickness could be involved). Nonetheless, Yahweh is also acclaimed as the healer of diseases (103:3), and testimonies are known of people who cried to him when sick and were healed (30:2[3]; 107:20). Two petitions for healing from sickness, which imply forgiveness of sins, according to the ancient Israelite conception, are recorded in 6:2[3] and 41:4[5]:

Be gracious to me, O Yahweh, for I am feeble;
heal me (*r^epā'ēnî*), O Yahweh, for my bones are troubled.

O Yahweh, be gracious to me;
heal me, for I have sinned against you.

As far as sins and transgressions are concerned, petitions for deliverance may apply, as in 39:8[9], "Deliver me (*hassîlênî*) from all my transgressions", but explicit requests for forgiveness are also in order. Here we have the verb *nāsā*, "to lift, carry, take", which, when applied to sin, means "to forgive" (32:5; 85:2[3]; 25:18; 99:8; 32:1). Sure that Yahweh is a forgiving God (99:8) and that "blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven" (32:1), the suppliant of Ps 25 prays, "See my affliction and forgive (*sā*) all my sins" (v. 18); "O Yahweh, pardon (*slh*) my iniquity, for it is great!" (v. 11). In this verse we have the verb *sālah*, "to forgive, pardon", used elsewhere in the psalms only in 103:3, where Yahweh is said to be the "forgiver" of iniquities. But two related nouns from

the same root, *sallāh*, "forgiving", and *s^olîhâ*, "forgiveness", are used once each applied to Yahweh, in whom there is forgiveness (130:4) and who is ready to forgive (86:5).

The Piel of *kpr*, *kipper*, meaning "to cover over, pacify, make propitiation", is used once, "Deliver us, and *purge away* our sins" (79:9). This is the verb used to express the concept of atonement in the Old Testament. It appears again in the psalms in the clause, "he forgave their iniquity" (78:38). The Piel of the verb *hāta'*, "to miss (a goal or way), go wrong, sin", meaning "to purify from sin or uncleanness", is used in 51:7[9], in the petition, "Purge me with hyssop", possibly a reference to a purification ritual by sprinkling with a hyssop sprig. Ps 51 present three other verbs used in petitions related to forgiveness of and purification from sin. The verb *kābas*, "to wash", is used twice, "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity" (v. 2[4]); "Wash me and I will be whiter than snow" (v. 7[9]). The verb *ṭāhēr*, "to be clean, pure" (Piel, "to cleanse"), occurs twice in the same verses, in parallelism with *kābas*, but once in the imperative, "Cleanse me from my sin" (v. 2[4]). In verses 1[3] and 9[11] the suppliant twice asks Yahweh to have his transgressions and iniquities blotted out, using the verb *māhāh*, "to wipe (out), blot out".

We shall now close this section by referring to two verbs, *yākāh* (Hiphil), "to rebuke", and *yāsar* (Piel), "to chasten", which are used in parallelism in the petitions at the opening of Pss 6 and 38, "O Yahweh, *rebuke* me not in your anger, nor *chasten* me in your wrath!" (v. 1[2] in both psalms). This petition seems to be connected with the idea that all disease and misfortune were sent by God as rebuke or chastisement for sins, the formulation of which is made clear in the Book of Job. In these two cases, the suppliant seems to be aware, at least implicitly, that he has done wrong and deserves punishment.

He certainly knows that blessed is the man whom Yahweh chastens (94:12), but he probably feels that he has already suffered enough, or could be afraid of experiencing the destructive power of God's justice which normally applies to those who step back from the covenant relationship (cf. Dt 11:16,17; 29:20ff; 2 Kg 22:16,17).

We have now basically covered the types of petition which are found in the Lament Psalms. Whatever the problems of the suppliants might have been, the general idea of salvation/deliverance always applies, and it is no wonder that petitions formulated in these and other semantically related terms are so predominant and diversified in the Psalter. This overwhelming predominance of the salvation motif in the psalms (=deliverance from all sorts of trouble, including the healing of diseases and the forgiveness of sins) serves to uphold the conclusion that the essential feature of the Yahwist religion, expressed in its faith and cultic institutions, was its remarkable salvific nature, revealed as a norm in the practice of justice on behalf of the powerless members of the community. It is the salvific religion *par excellence*, in which Yahweh is hailed as the saviour of the oppressed, the liberator God, the guardian of justice, the protector of life.

3.3. THE SUPPLIANT'S CHARACTER AND STATUS

Since some overlap is bound to occur among the subjects treated in each section, much of what is to be discussed here may have already been suggested. However, this fact does not pose any difficulty, but is rather welcome. Our question now has to do with the character and status of the suppliants in the Lament Psalms. How are they referred to or described in the psalms? Our primary interest here is with the terms and expressions that indicate the character of the petitioners, including the issue of self awareness

of innocence and guilt. In this respect, what is the petitioner's status? How does he or she stand before Yahweh?

Ps 17, unlike many other psalms, has no indication as to the character of the petitioner, except for the obvious fact that in it the one who prays is an individual, rather than the community. However, the petitioner's status of innocence and integrity is made quite evident, as he qualifies his prayer as one that is not uttered with deceitful lips (v. 1d); takes himself to be in the right, in need of justice (v. 2); and assumes that he is test-proof in his loyalty as it concerns his thoughts, words, and deeds (vv. 3-5).

The historical notes found in the superscription of some psalms, like for instance, "A Psalm of David, when he feigned madness before Abimelech, so that he drove him out, and he went away" (34; cf. also 3; 7; 18; 51; 54; 56; 57; 59; 60; 63; 142), attest the traditional and uncritical acceptance of the Davidic authorship of the Psalms, which was only concerned with determining the possible event in David's life which gave rise to a particular psalm. But in view of the fact that the superscriptions in general seem to have been added by some later compiler or editor, as a fruit of an ancient speculative exegesis in a midrashic style, and that the particular terms traditionally understood as indicators of authorship are more likely to be indicators of collections or compilers, it follows that the superscriptions cannot be taken at their face value. We have to rely on the psalms themselves, in their internal evidence, in the scarce and generic information which they provide on the psalmists, since no specific identification can be attained in this regard with any reasonable degree of certainty.

3.3.1. Special Attachment and Loyalty to God

As we consider the general character of the petitioners in the Lament Psalms, the first dividing line to be reckoned with is that which establishes the distinction between psalms of the individual and psalms of the community. In the latter case we know that the leading suppliant is the king or a priest, or even another civil or cult official, representing the whole worshipping community in times of national crisis. Thus it is the nation which prays for Yahweh's salvation from foreign enemies who threaten or oppress the country, or pleads for restoration from the state of national calamity, occasioned by defeat at war, by exile, and by general decadence.

In such circumstances those who stand before Yahweh are his own chosen people, his covenant partners, who were liberated from Egypt and put under Yahweh's special protection. Thus the nation is alluded to in those psalms as "Joseph" (80:1), referring either to the northern kingdom or to the whole country, and "Jacob" (79:7; 85:1[2]). The latter, according to Briggs, is "a term of endearment for the chosen people of Yahweh",⁷³ in his view apparently referring to the restored people of God, the poor post-exilic community, although it should be conceded that in many psalms what seems to refer to the Exile may refer to earlier disasters of which we do not know. The people is also depicted as "your congregation" (74:2), again an expression that may apply to the restored nation. The Hebrew word *'ēdā* is technically applied to the company of the children of Israel when coming out of Egypt (115 times), and its use here is reminiscent of that fact: "Remember your congregation which you have gotten of old" (74:2).

Other references to the people include: "Your people" (74:13; 80:4; 83:3[4]; 85:2[3], 6[7]; 106:4); "his people" (85:8[9]); "your servants" (79:2,10; 90:13,16);

"your nation" (106:5); "your chosen ones" (106:5); "your protected ones" (83:13); "the flock of your pasture" (79:13); "your godly ones" (79:13; 85:8[9]); the "faithful ones" (12:1[2]); "the righteous" (125:3); and two metaphoric appellations, "your dove" (74:19), and the "vine" (80:8-16) which Yahweh brought from Egypt and planted in the land of Canaan. All these terms and expressions point to Israel's special status (including at least the worshipping community), or the special relationship existing between Yahweh and his people Israel, from its origin in the Exodus and throughout its history.

Naturally some of these designations also apply to the individual members of the worshipping community, and hence to individual psalmists. The godly or pious (*h^asîdîm*) are said to be "those who turn to him [God] in their hearts", "those who fear him" (85:8[9], 9[10]). The term *hāsîd* is cognate to *hesed*, which denotes the covenant loyalty, and so it can be explained as designating he who practices *hesed*, "one who is loyal to the covenant", who is faithful to his covenant obligations or to the revealed will of Yahweh. Usually rendered as "godly", or "pious", or "saint", it should perhaps be rendered as "loyal" or "faithful", which, *mutatis mutandis*, would be somewhat equivalent to the Christian appellation of "believer", implying not only a disposition of the heart, but also outward integrity.

Being thus keen to comply with his religious duties, he is one of those who attend the appointed feasts, the holy convocations, who recite or sing their prayers of lament and thanksgiving in the sanctuary (or have them recited or sung on their behalf), who offer sacrifices, who fulfil their vows, etc., as seen throughout the Psalter, where the word occurs twenty-five times (4:3[4]; 12:1[2]; 16:10; 18:25[26]; 30:4[5]; 31:23[24]; 32:6; 37:28; 43:1; 50:5; 52:9[11]; 79:2; 85:8[9]; 86:2; 89:19[20]; 97:10; 116:15; 132:9,16; 145:10,17; 148:14;

149:1,5,9). Outside the Psalter it occurs only seven times, a fact that serves to confirm the predominantly cultic use of the term. It is normally used of man, and only rarely of God (145:17; Jer 3:12).⁷⁴

The following few verses show how special the status of *ḥāsîd* is deemed, and the consciousness of it on the part of the suppliant, who assumes such status in his prayer; and they contain some other expressions which are associated with it, by effect of poetic parallelism:

But know that Yahweh has set apart the *ḥāsîd* for himself;
Yahweh hears when I call to him. (4:3[4])

Therefore let every one who is *ḥāsîd* offer prayer to you;
at a time of distress, in the rush of great waters,
they shall not reach him. (32:6)

Yahweh loves those who hate evil;⁷⁵
he preserves the life of his *ḥ^asîdîm*. (97:10)

Incline your ear, O Yahweh, and answer me,
for I am poor and needy.
Preserve my life, for I am a *ḥāsîd*;
save your servant who trusts in you, O my God! (86:1[2])

Love Yahweh, all you his *ḥ^asîdîm*!
Yahweh preserves the faithful,
but abundantly pays back him who acts arrogantly.
(31:23[24])

Whereas '*ebed*, "servant, slave", can refer to the king, with Ringgren and Anderson it has to be conceded that "it is by no means an exclusively royal title".⁷⁶ Among other things, it can designate the "worshipper" (102:14[15]; 116:16), and the plural form, '*aḇādîm*, as we have already suggested, can denote the whole worshipping community. Like *ḥāsîd*, a term with which it is very often associated, it also points to a special (Covenant) relationship with Yahweh, but with a different nuance. Whereas the term *ḥāsîd* points to the loyalty required to the specific obligations imposed by the covenant relationship, '*ebed* points to the difference of status between the two

covenanted parties, expressing the dependence of the weaker partner on the stronger one.

Nevertheless, in spite of all that we have said, at times it is quite possible that *'ebed* should be taken in the literal acceptance of the word, as is suggested by the analogy between expressions such as "your servant" and "your prisoner", when addressed to Yahweh by individual suppliants in the Lament Psalms. It seems clear that in the expression "your prisoner" we are dealing, not with a self applied honorific title, but rather with a conventional speech form which confers on the suppliant the category of an actual prisoner (*'āsîr*). The use of the possessive pronoun, "your", in this case, only serves to indicate how special such a category of suppliant is in the sight of Yahweh. Since "poor and needy" hired servants, oppressed by their rich masters, are likely to have been among those who brought their cry before Yahweh in the sanctuary (cf. Dt 24:14-15), it is only fair to suggest that the expression "your servant" can sometimes be explained in analogy with that of "your prisoner", as being a literal self indication of the social status of the suppliant, one which is held dear by the saviour God Yahweh.

Another term abundantly employed by the psalmists which serves to characterize the suppliant and indicate his special status is *šaddîq*, "just, righteous". It is predominantly found in the Psalter (fifty-two times) and in the book of Proverbs (seventy-four times). In general terms, it can be explained as Anderson does:

The Hebrew *šaddîqîm* describes persons who are what they should be. The criterion is not primarily certain ethical norms as such, but the fulfilment of the demands of the relationships within which one finds oneself. The Israelite stood in a particular relationship to his God, his fellow man, and his world in general, and each of these relationships made certain demands upon him from day to day.

The righteous man accepted his responsibilities and carried them out accordingly".⁷⁷

It is quite probable that the use of *ṣaddîq* in the Old Testament, particularly in the psalms, has its roots in the legal trials held in the sanctuary. A person who was accused by his adversaries and proved innocent by Yahweh, through a prophetic oracle or another cultic means, was then declared *ṣaddîq*, i.e., somebody against whom there was no outstanding charge. In need of justice, he sought the just God, who justified him, both acknowledging his innocence and imparting justice to him, involving his deliverance and the punishment of his enemies. In the sphere of the cultus it came to be applied to the worshipping community (1:5; 32:11; 33:1; 125:3; etc.), and is sometimes used in the same fashion as other terms, such as *ḥāsîd*, "loyal", *ʿmûnîm*, "faithful" (12:1[2]; 31:23[24]), and *nāqî*, "innocent, guiltless" (10:8; 15:5; 24:4; 94:21; 106:38). The use of the terms "righteous", "innocent", "pious", "honest", "faithful", etc. in the psalms is thus explained by Barth:

These terms are strictly reserved in the psalms to the "guests in God's tent" (Ps. XV.1ff.; cf. Pss V. and XXIV.3-6), that is, for all who appear before the face of God and by the imparting of righteousness to them *become* righteous. It is presumed that this imparting of righteousness had its regular place in the worship in Israel--either in the liturgy of the entry into the temple, in the pronouncing of blessing and curse at the conclusion, or elsewhere.⁷⁸

That the imparting of righteousness, as part of a liturgic act, might have had its place in the worship in Israel, perhaps in different forms in different times, is not improbable, but it does not seem proper to say that "all" those terms are "strictly reserved" in the psalms for those who come to worship God in the sanctuary. In most cases that could be the truth, and again one should not always hasten to take them as a neutral designation of the worshipper.

When *ṣaddîq* is used in the plural, especially in expressions such as "the congregation of the righteous" (1:5), "the tents of the righteous" (118:15), etc., there is no doubt that it is descriptively referring to those who take part in the communal worship, the faithful, those who fear Yahweh. Nevertheless, as a cultic word seemingly borrowed from the common legal usage, it seems proper to see it as an indication of the moral and ethical character which is required of those who come "to seek the face of Yahweh" and praise him. In the light of this it can be said that Ps 15 means what it says. The picture portrayed in it is of a "just" man, one who does what is right, who practices justice, the opposite of the wicked. In fact he is quite often depicted as victim of the wicked (cf. 37:12,32; 31:17-18[18-19]; etc.). And no matter the religious overtones normally embebed in the word (after all Yahweh himself is the source of all justice), its legal basis, as seen in Ex 23:6-7, should not be kept out of sight, for this is precisely the background over against which many psalms of lament of the individual should be seen:

You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor (*'ebyôn*) in his suit. Keep far from a false charge, and do not slay the innocent (*nāqî*) and righteous (*ṣaddîq*), for I will not acquit the wicked.

Besides having in this passage a good, though short and perhaps technical description of the wicked man (a malicious witness, cf. v. 1, who makes false charge, who plots against and oppresses the poor, slaying the innocent and just man), we also see the association between the terms *ṣaddîq*, "just, righteous", and *nāqî*, "innocent", both here denoting the guiltless or blameless person, and thus probably referring back to the *'ebyôn*, the poor or needy man. Being the usual victim of the wicked, the poor can thus be identified as the "just" in the psalms. And *nāqî*, far from being a term "strictly reserved in the

psalms for the guests in God's tent", in all five occurrences in the psalms, as seen below, it seems to have the same meaning that it expresses in Ex. 23:7, namely "the blameless or guiltless person", against whom no crime can be alleged. In 10:8 *nāqî* is the innocent murdered by the wicked; in 15:5 it denotes the innocent against whom injustice (normally leading to death, cf. Dt 27:25) is practiced through bribery; in 24:4 the reference is to *n^oqî kappayim*, "the innocent of hands", that is, the man who has innocent or guiltless hands, who (in contrast to the wicked) do not shed innocent blood; in 94:21 it is again identified with the *ṣaddîq*, denoting the innocent who is put to death by wicked rulers; in 106:38 it is found in the expression *dām nāqî*, "innocent blood", referring to the innocent children of the unfaithful Israelites whose blood was poured out in Canaan in sacrificial rites dedicated to pagan Gods. It is obvious that in 24:4 the term is applied to those who "ascend the hill of Yahweh", but for all that it does not function as a neutral appellative, but rather as an ethical or moral requirement prescribed for those who come before Yahweh in the cultic festival, irrespective of the existence of a possible ritual of recognition of innocence, or the imparting of righteousness which we have mentioned above.

It also seems clear that the "innocent" is usually the weak, the defenseless, and hence the poor, as confirmed by the expression *dām napšôt 'ebyônîm n^oqiyîm*, "the lifeblood of the innocent poor", in Jer 2:34. It is to be pointed out here that the adjective in the phrase "innocent poor" does not have a discriminative, but rather an explanatory function, i.e., it does not qualify a particular group of poor men as innocent over against the others supposedly not innocent (although such distinction could be applied to a particular individual in a specific law suit), rather it serves to make explicit an inherent quality or character of the *'ebyônîm* as a class. This adjectival usage

corresponds to that found in familiar phrases such as "white snow", "blue sky", "solid rock", etc. The fact is that, in the light of what we have seen, vis-à-vis the oppression, extortion, and violence of the wicked the poor is *ipso facto* just or innocent; and to be "just" or "righteous" (the usual words used to translate *ṣaddîq*) in such a context is not the same thing as being pious or keeping a good moral conduct, as these words came to be largely understood in later times because of their connection with Israel's cultic tradition.

3.3.2. Poor and Needy

Another point for consideration here is the designation of "poor" and "needy" as applied to the psalmists, notably in the self-descriptive phrase, "I am poor (*'ānî*) and needy (*'ebyôn*)" (40:17[18]; 70:5[6]; 86:1; 109:22). It also occurs in 35:10, but indirectly applied to the psalmist, in the 3rd. person.

The term *'ebyôn* is found sixty-one times in the Old Testament, twenty-three in the Book of Psalms alone (seventeen times in the singular and six in the plural). It is true that this term came in later times to be used to designate an attitude toward God and became a self-appellative for the sectarian Jews of the Qumran community and the name of an early Jewish Christian sect.⁷⁹ But at least in large measure this happened because of the privileged status of the poor in the sight of God in the Old Testament, where they are put under Yahweh's special protection, due to their helplessness and vulnerability to the acts of injustice of the rich and powerful. It also happened because of the increasing predominance of the poor among the godly in Israel, especially after the exile, when the nation itself, humiliated, spoiled, impoverished, and afflicted by its enemies, could be properly called "poor". At any rate, it is to be said that the term *'ebyôn*, throughout the Old Testament, chiefly means what it says (see note 31 to ch. 6, p. 399), i.e., it designates a

poor person in his or her situation of need, of want of material things as basic as, for instance, food (112:9; 113:7; 132:15; Ex 23:11; Job 31:19; Est 9:22). The term applies to people of low social rank such as a hired servant (Dt 24:14) or a beggar (113:7; 1 Sam 2:8). Always weak and vulnerable, the *'ebyônîm* easily become prey of the rich wicked, by whom they are oppressed, spoiled, humiliated and killed (35:10; 109:16; 37:14; Job 24:4,14; Ez 18:12; 22:29; Am 2:6; 4:1; 5:12; 8:4,6; etc.).

The Psalms show that in their affliction they raise their cry to Yahweh (12:5[6]; 72:12) who hears them (69:33[34]), who cares for and delivers them (35:10; 72:4,12,13; 107:41; 109:31; 113:7; 132:15; 140:12[13]). Since, in a technical sense, it is through cultic means that "Yahweh maintains the cause of the afflicted and executes justice for the needy" (140:12[13]), whose presence and salvific experiences were conspicuously central in the realm of the Israelite cultus, it is in order to point out that the terms "poor" and "godly", or "upright", are a few times found in adjacent lines or verses (37:14; 86:1-2; 132:15-16; 140:12-13[13-14]). But this by no means confers on the term *'ebyôn* the character of a religious predicate, much less the name of a supposed religious sect or party. After all, the "poor and needy" enjoy a special double status before Yahweh, both because of their unprivileged human condition, as victims of oppression and injustice, and because of the fact that they basically constitute the group of those who seek Yahweh, who trust in him and seek refuge in him, who fear and praise him. As a result they are rightfully the "godly", the "just", the "upright" par excellence. Without this understanding, which puts Yahweh's strong bias for the poor in perspective, there would be no reason at all for the pious to be called "poor", as actually came to happen in later times, through the normal linguistic process of borrowing by association. Even so the spiritualization of the word "poor"

never became absolute, and its primary sense of a socioeconomic nature is to be seen throughout the Old Testament, even in the occasional instances in the psalms where it is found close to such terms as "godly" or "upright".

In 37:14 *'ebyôn* is parallel to *yîšrê-dārek*, "the upright of way", those who are right in conduct. However, whatever the association that might exist between the two expressions, the former is not to be explained by the latter, but the other way around, since the "poor and needy" (*'ānî w^o'ebyôn*), are already clearly depicted as literally poor in the stichs a and b. They are the usual victims of the wicked, whose actions against them are thus described: "The wicked draw the sword and bend their bows, to bring down the poor and needy". Whether or not these words are to be taken metaphorically (and this is likely), the fact is that they are describing a situation of real oppression and violence. It remains for us to conclude that *yîšrê-dārek* is either a moral attribute that came to be ascribed to the poor, or, which is more likely to be the case, it is an expression meaning "the blameless", "the innocent". As such it perfectly applies to the poor as victim of the wicked.

In 86:1 the psalmist declares that he is "poor and needy", and in v. 2 that he is "godly" or "loyal" (*hāsîd*), and he also refers to himself in the 3rd person as being God's servant, who trusts in him. It seems obvious that the petitioner in this psalm is both a poor man, perhaps a hired servant, and also a godly person, as all the other poor who seek refuge in Yahweh, who seek his face in the sanctuary. He wants his cry to be heard by God on account of his double special status of "poor" and "loyal". It would certainly be a mistake to suppose that "poor and needy" here simply means "godly". Likewise the *'ebyônîm* in 132:15 cannot be equated to the "priests" (*kôh^anîm*) and the "saints" (*h^asîdîm*) in the following verse, despite the supposed parallelism, for

they are shown to be distinct entities in the context. In 140:12, "I know that Yahweh maintains the cause of the *poor*, and executes justice for the *needy*", 'ānî and 'ebyônîm undoubtedly signify the real poor, whose cry for justice is brought to Yahweh's court, and so the "righteous" and "upright" of v. 13 are meant to be the poor themselves as they comprise the majority among the worshipping community, or perhaps the whole community, who praise God for his acts of justice on behalf of the poor and oppressed.

In fourteen instances in the psalms 'ebyôn is used along with 'ānî, either attached to it, as in the expression 'ānî w' 'ebyôn, or in parallelism, as in 140:12 just quoted above. The term 'ānî occurs some eighty times in the Old Testament,⁸⁰ and is found much more often in the singular than in the plural, signifying "a poor man", somebody subjected to affliction, oppression, and humiliation. The word (an adjective from a stative verb) can be then rendered as "poor, afflicted, humbled, oppressed". It occurs thirty one times in the psalms, including its use in four self descriptive expressions, "I am solitary and poor" (25:16); "I am poor and sorrowful" (69:29[30]); "this poor man cried . . ." (34:6[7]); and "I am poor and about to die . . ." (88:15[16]). What has been said above in reference to 'ebyôn is, *mutatis mutandis*, also applied to 'ānî, especially in regard to the use of the expression, "I am poor and needy", which in all probability refers to a person who is really poor in social terms, implying both the idea of oppression and humiliation, and also of need or want. We should add to this the fact that in the realm of the cultus, as attested in the Psalter, the poor are also the righteous and godly par excellence, and the references to them should not too quickly, if at all, be taken metaphorically to refer to the pious.

3.3.3. Guilt Versus Innocence

Another point related to the psalmist's condition is the question of their spiritual status before Yahweh in terms of their self awareness of sin or guiltlessness. As they brought their cry before Yahweh in the sanctuary they were seemingly expected either to confess their sins, probably also going through a ritual of purification, as Ps 51:7 apparently suggests, or to protest their innocence, as shown in 17:3-5 (which we have seen) or 26:2-7, a good parallel text which is quoted below:

Prove me, O Yahweh, and try me;
 test my heart and my mind.
 For your steadfast love is before my eyes,
 and I walk in your truth.
 I do not sit with false men,
 nor do I consort with dissemblers;
 I hate the company of evildoers,
 and I will not sit with the wicked.
 I wash my hands in innocence (*niqqāyôn*),
 and go about your altar, O Yahweh,
 to sing aloud a song of thanksgiving,
 and to declare all your wondrous deeds.

Like the psalmist of Ps 17 (v. 3), the suppliant of Ps 26 (v. 2) declares his openness to God's scrutiny, before affirming his innocence and integrity. The washing of hands in v. 6 rather than being a reference to the ritual purification prescribed by the law for the priests (Ex 30:19ff.) is most certainly related to a ritual properly designed for such occasions, which would include an oath of purification (cf. 73:13; Is 1:16; Dt 21:6; Mt 27:24). The phrase "and go around your altar" could be either an expression of hope (along with v. 7), whereby the suppliant after obtaining his deliverance will join in the solemn procession around the altar or will be making a thanksgiving offering, or most probably an allusion to one aspect of the ritual implied by the reciting of the prayers for deliverance, as admitted by Kraus.⁸¹

It is interesting to observe that in most laments the psalmist's innocence is either affirmed, suggested, or implied, whereas confessions of sin are rarely found. The boldness of their admission of guiltlessness is rather shocking for the Christian mentality, and is usually explained as Weiser does in regard to 17:3-5:

The detailed protestation of innocence is not to be understood as the expression of a naive self-righteousness, let alone as the affirmation of the worshipper's sinlessness, but as an effort of the latter to justify himself in face of unwarranted accusations--hence the use of negative formulations, fashioned in the traditional style of the confession (cf. Pss 15; 24:3ff.; Deut. 26:13ff.; Ezek. 18:5ff.).

However we explain the issue, it seems clear for most of the poor suffering servants of Yahweh that the affliction or oppression under which they are and from which they seek deliverance at Yahweh's court, in his sanctuary, is not a plight to be passively accepted, as if it were the result of a specific wrongdoing they had committed or sinful conduct they had indulged in. Manifesting rather an awareness of being innocent victims of injustice, they decidedly pray to Yahweh for deliverance, as in 59:1-4[2-5]:

Deliver me from my enemies, O my God,
protect me from those who rise up against me.
Deliver me from those who work evil,
and save me from bloodthirsty men.
For, lo, they lie in wait for my life;
fierce men band themselves against me.
For no transgression or sin of mine, O Yahweh,
for no fault of mine, they run and make ready.

Of course, in spite of that conviction of integrity and innocence, which is to be seen in connection with some specific wrong done to them, particularly the unjust charges of malicious and deceitful enemies, at times a clear consciousness of sin does arise in psalms of lament (25; 38; 39; 31; 40; 41; 51)

and thanksgiving (32; 103) of the individual. (In the Lament Psalms of the Community explicit confession of sins is only found in 79 and 106, whereas in 85 there is an allusion to the iniquities of God's people as having been forgiven).

However, in all such cases it is almost certain that we are dealing with late compositions (exilic or post-exilic), in which, except for the Community Laments, a clear or highly probable case of sickness is involved. Doubts could arise in regard to Pss 31, 51, and especially 25. However, the confession of sin is in itself a significant clue for us to suspect that cases of sickness are here involved. Besides, Ps 31, whether taken as a composite work or a literary unit, does not hide the fact that at least vv. 9-12 sound very much like the lament of a sick man. As for Ps 51, Anderson's perception does not differ from mine:

The poem may well be the writer's expression of his own consciousness of sin and the need for forgiveness. It is possible that the immediate cause was some serious illness which the Psalmist, as well as others, regarded as God's punishment for sin; the function of the Psalm would be found in the religious ceremonies performed by the afflicted man, or on his behalf, in the sanctuary.⁸²

Besides his acknowledgment of guilt and request for forgiveness, the suppliant of Ps 25 (vv. 7,11,18) describes himself as "lonely (or "friendless") and afflicted" (v. 16). To be abandoned and despised by friends and kinsmen seems to have been a common lot of many who were "struck by God" with serious illness (cf. 38:11; 41:9). References to foolishness and the need for teaching and instruction (a clear wisdom note in some lament psalms) seem to be also related to illness, for the sinner is a foolish man who despises divine instruction (Pr 1:7) and therefore he is punished with sickness (cf.

107:17-20, reading "fool" with MT; 32:8-9; 38:5; 51:6). Also the suppliant of Ps 25, as a penitent sinner, becomes open to instruction (vv. 4-5, 8-12). So in fact it seems highly probable that confessions of sin in the Lament Psalms of the Individual are to be connected with sickness, although in a few other psalms involving sickness (6; 88; 102; 69), including one of thanksgiving for healing (Ps 30), there is no explicit reference to such a confession, even though Ps 6 is among the traditional seven Penitential Psalms of the Early Church (6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143). The probable explanation for this is that sometimes either forgiveness or healing is implied, for to ask for one is to ask for both. Healing includes forgiveness of sins and vice-versa.

The connection between sickness and sin is clearly stated in the psalms, in accord with the traditional belief that the former was God's punishment for the latter in man's life. Ps 38:1-4[2-5] is a good example:

O Yahweh, rebuke me not in your anger
 nor chasten me in your wrath!
 For your arrows have sunk into me,
 and your hand has come down on me.
 There is no soundness in my flesh
 because of your indignation;
 there is no health in my bones
 because of my sin.
 For my iniquities have gone over my head;
 they weigh like burden too heavy for me.

Undoubtedly this is the kind of prayer that the friends of Job unsuccessfully wanted him to pray. But even when the consciousness of sin is present, so are the psalmists' enemies who afflict them with slanders and false accusations. In such cases consciousness of guilt and innocence are blended in the same psalm, the former corresponding to the suppliant's attitude before God, and the latter his standing vis-à-vis the malice and false charges of his enemies. Again Ps 38 is a good example, where the psalmist,

in vv. 17-20[18-21], both confesses his sin and complains against those who are his foes without cause (RSV), who hate him wrongfully. It is Ps 41:4-10[5-11], however, that offers a more vivid and detailed description of the way in which a sick man was surrounded and pressed by his enemies:

As for me, I said, "O Yahweh, be gracious to me;
 heal me, for I have sinned against you!"
 My enemies say of me in malice:
 "When will he die, and his name perish?"
 And when one comes to see me, he utters empty words,
 while his heart gathers mischief;
 when he goes out he tells it abroad.
 All who hate me whisper together against me;
 they imagine the worst for me.
 They say, "A deadly thing has fastened upon him;
 he will not rise again from where he lies."
 Even a bosom friend in whom I trusted,
 who ate of my bread, has lifted his heel against me.
 But you, O Yahweh, be gracious to me,
 and raise me up, that I may requite them!

Concluding this section, we reassert the fact that the psalmists (not necessarily the authors, but the original suppliants), as members of the worshipping community, were ascribed the special cultic status of "righteous" or "just", and "godly" or "loyal". But seemingly most of the pious who sought God's help, protection and deliverance in crucial situations were the poor, the real victims of exploitation, oppression, and humiliation, and easily led to die, for the sake of whom Yahweh instituted special legal provisions and whom he put under his personal care. As in Ps 17, those servants of Yahweh are often sure of their integrity before their God and their innocence before the slanders and accusations of their enemies. At times, apparently in cases involving sickness, they express a consciousness of sin and guilt, from which they expect deliverance, in terms of forgiveness and healing. But usually their innocence, whether implied, suggested, or boldly affirmed, portrays them as victims of injustice, for which they cry before their God. In all they are the

opposite of the wicked, who are the ungodly, the infidel, in so far as they do not seek or trust in God (they do not feel the need for doing this, as they depend on their own wealth and power), they do not live in accordance with the norms and regulations of the Covenant, but according to their own will, in defiance of God, robbing and oppressing the poor and godly. For them is reserved Yahweh's wrath and anger, whereas for the former, his favour, mercy, and salvation.

3.4. THE SUPPLIANT'S PLIGHT AND DELIVERANCE

Not much remains to be said about the suppliant's plight, but here we shall include a brief treatment of the enemies, since they very often play a central role in the petitioner's plight in the Lament Psalms, for which in fact, in most cases, they are held responsible. Also, although the fact of deliverance (the objective of the prayers of the oppressed) is not always stated clearly in single psalms of lament, nevertheless, some indication of it is often given, and eloquent witness to it is found in the psalms of thanksgiving, a psalm *Gattung* especially designed for its recountal in the cultic liturgy. Thus, after considering the suppliant's plight, a last word regarding the fact of deliverance will be naturally in order.

3.4.1. The Diversity of Misfortune and Suffering

It has already been indicated that the Lament Psalms of the Individual, far from being the prayers of one sole category of petitioner, as the king, for instance, are to be seen, in their original composition, as representing the genuine supplications of a wide variety of individuals, pressed and afflicted in different ways. Clues for this are found in different types of psalms, particularly those which were apparently used in a communal liturgy. One good example is Ps 107, which, according to Mowinckel, may have been used

at a communal thank-offering festival, a kind of celebration that became usual in later times, "at which different groups of people who had been saved . . . would come forth with their sacrifice and say their 'Amen' or 'his mercy endureth for ever', after the part of the common psalm, in which the singers would refer to *their* particular experience."⁸³ The psalm briefly describes the plight of four different types of people who cried to Yahweh in their distress.

First come the travellers (vv. 4-5):

Some wandered in desert wastes
 finding no way to a city to dwell in;
 hungry and thirsty,
 their soul fainted within them.

The verb *t'h* means "to wander about aimlessly" or "to be lost" (Ex 23:4; Is 53:6), and the original reference seems to have been to lost travellers who, hungry and thirsty, and utterly exhausted, could not find their way to an inhabited place where they could find food and drink, besides rest and guidance. This is most likely the way in which "a city to dwell in" is to be understood, instead of being a place in which to settle down.

The second group is thus described (vv. 10-12):

Some sat in darkness and in gloom,
 prisoners in affliction and in irons,
 for they had rebelled against the words of God,
 and spurned the counsel of the Most High.
 Their hearts were bowed down with hard labour;
 they fell down, with none to help.

The reference here is to the prisoners, *'asîrîm*. They could be those who, like Joseph in Egypt, were confined to a real prison (Gn 39:20); those who under certain charges were, like Jeremiah (Jer 38:6), thrown into an empty pit, while waiting for a divine decision regarding their case (Lv 24:12; Nu 15:34); and very often those who were taken captives into a foreign land (Is 14:07;

Lam 3:34; Zech 9:11), where their labour force was usually heavily exploited in building projects, mining, etc.

If Ps 107 was based on a pre-exilic composition, which was adapted to the needs of the restored community of the Persian period, as Anderson suggests,⁸⁴ then it is possible that v. 11, which interprets the trouble referred to in v. 10 as punishment for sin, was the work of a late editor, with the Babylonian captivity in view. However, no matter the period in question, it would not have been unusual for innocent people to become prisoners under false charges. That seems to have been the case of the suppliant of Ps 69. Apparently he was a poor, sick man (vv. 32[33], 26[27], 29[30]) who became oppressed by his enemies, who demanded from him the restoration of things he did not steal (v. 4[5]), and had him imprisoned in a cistern (vv. 18[19], 33[34]), where he was ill treated (vv. 20-21[21-22]) and his life was in danger (vv. 1-2[2-3], 13-15[14-16]).⁸⁵

A third group of people who cried to Yahweh in their trouble, according to Ps 107, are the sick (vv. 17-18):

Some were sick⁸⁶ through their sinful ways,
and because of their iniquities suffered affliction;
they loathed any kind of food,
and they drew near to the gates of death.

Perhaps the condition of the sick man is the most fully described in the Lament Psalms, because of the abundance of heart-rendering details which are used. Such moving depiction is mostly found in Pss 38, 88, and 102. And the most eloquent picture is perhaps that of 102:3-11[4-12]:

For my days pass away like smoke,
and my bones burn like a furnace.
My heart is smitten like grass, and withered;
for I forget to eat my bread.

Because of my loud groaning
 my bones cleave to my flesh.
 I am like a vulture of the wilderness,
 like an owl of the waste places;
 I lie awake,
 I am like a lonely bird on the housetop.
 All the day my enemies taunt me,
 those who deride me use my name for a curse.
 For I eat ashes like bread,
 and mingle tears with my drink,
 because of your indignation and anger;
 for you have lifted me up and cast me down.
 My days are like an evening shadow;
 I wither away like grass.

In the light of these verses the psalmist is as good as dead. In such cases, by giving a vivid description of their physical suffering (not to mention the usual sense of guilt for their sin, the desolation of friends and kinsmen, and the unjust persecution of the enemies), the suppliants seek to excite God's compassion.

The fourth category of petitioners mentioned in Ps 107 are distressed seafarers, whose plight is thus described (vv. 23-27):

Some went down to the sea in ships,
 doing business in the great waters;
 they saw the deeds of Yahweh,
 and his wonders in the deep.
 For he commanded, and raised the stormy wind,
 which lifted up the waves of the sea.
 They rose up to heaven, they went down to the depths;
 their courage melted away in misery;
 they reeled and staggered like drunken men,
 and were at their wit's end.⁸⁷

It is a bit surprising to find here this special reference to troubled seafarers, as being among those of whom it is said in vv. 6, 13, 19, and 28, "Then they cried to Yahweh in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress". The fact is that the Hebrews were never regarded as a seafaring people, in so far as sailing was not an occupation familiar to them.

Nevertheless, there are indications in the Old Testament to suggest that Israelites could have been sometimes involved in sailing. Solomon is said to have built a fleet of ships at Ezion-Geber, on the shore of the red sea, manned by servants of his along with experienced seamen from Tyre (1 Kg 9:26-28; 10:22; 2 Ch 8:17-18; 9:21). Ships designed for long trips could be boarded at Joppa (Jon 1:3) and also along the northern Canaanite coast. In fact the description quoted above is reminiscent of the sea storm in the Book of Jonah. In both cases the sailors are terrified and panic-stricken by the frightening storm (described as raised by Yahweh) and realize that their navigational knowledge and skills are of no avail.

In all these cases, the people involved are said to be in a situation of trouble, *ṣar* (thirty-eight times in the Psalter, sometimes meaning "enemy"), and distresses or afflictions, *m^oṣūqôṭ* (four times in Ps 107, elsewhere in 25:17; in the singular in Job 15:24 and Zep 1:15; cf. *hammēṣîq*, "the oppressor", in Is 51:13,13). Falling in the same category of these terms we have *'ōnî*, "poverty, affliction" (ten times in the Psalter)--used of Job (10:15; 30:16,27), of the people of Israel when oppressed by the Egyptians (Ex 3:7,17; 4:31; etc.) and by other nations (44:24[25]; Lam 1:3), and to describe the usual condition of the poor, *'ānî* (Job 36:15), and needy, *'ebyôn* (107:41)--*ṣārâ*, "trouble, affliction" (twenty times in the Psalter); and *'āmāl* (thirteen times in the Psalter), meaning "trouble, sorrow, pain", as one's own suffering; and "trouble, mischief", as done to others, and sometimes "labour, toil". These generic terms are the most usual descriptions of the common plight of those who cry to Yahweh for deliverance. In the same line Ps 107:39 introduces three other words, *rā'â*, "evil, misery, trouble" (along with *ra'*, thirty times in the Psalter), *'ōser*, "oppression, restraint" (here and Pr 30:16; Is 53:8), and *yāqôn*, "sorrow, grief" (four times in the Psalter).

Ps 103:6 has a generic designation for those who bring their cry before Yahweh, which can also be taken as characteristic of their common plight:

Yahweh executes justice
and judgment for all who are *oppressed* ('āšûq).

This is the same term occurring in 146:7, from the root 'šq, "to oppress, wrong, extort", cognate of 'ōšeq, "oppression" (62:10[11]; 73:8; 119:134), caused by the wicked "oppressor", 'ōšeq (72:4; 119:21), who shall be crushed or "oppressed" ('šq) by the ideal king, the Anointed of Yahweh (72:4). Using another term for the oppressed, *daḵ*, from *dāḵah*, "to crush, oppress", Ps 9:9[10] refers to those who seek refuge in Yahweh:

Yahweh is a stronghold for the oppressed,
a stronghold in times of trouble.

These are those who in v. 10[11] know God's name, who trust in him and seek him (cf. 10:18; 74:21).

The condition of being poor can also be seen as an aspect of the suppliants' plight. We have already commented on the concept of "poor and needy" ('ānî, 'ebyôn) as a generic category of lamenters, in our previous section. To these Pss 9/10 add the 'anāwîm, "the poor, meek" (9:18[19]; 10:17; plus eleven times elsewhere in the Psalter), and the ḥēl'kâ, "poor, hapless", of whom it is said that, crushed by the wicked, he commits himself to Yahweh (10:8,10,14). Among those who are generally called poor and oppressed some groups are sometimes singled out, as the widow and the fatherless (146:9; 68:5[6]), the sojourner, *gēr* (146:9; 39:12[13]; 94:6), perhaps most prisoners and falsely accused individuals, the destitute, 'ar'ār (102:17[18]), and also the desolate or solitary, *yāhîd* (68:6[7]; 25:16).

The *gēr*, or resident alien, was normally poor, and thus dependent on the goodwill and generosity of the native inhabitants of the land in which he was provisionally or permanently settled (Lv 19:10; 23:22; Dt 24:19ff.). Vulnerable and subject to harassment and oppression, he was to be loved and respected as a native (Lv 19:33). He was subject to the Israelite laws (Ex 20:10; Lv 16:29; Nu 19:10) and once circumcised he was offered unrestricted access to the religious life of the Hebrews (Ex 12:48-49; Dt 16:11-14). Like the alien, dependent upon the goodwill of the local community and in need of special protection, was the *yāhîd*, the solitary. This word has been explained as referring to an unmarried man without means to purchase a bride,⁸⁸ or a lonely person, who lacked a family or clan to protect his rights.⁸⁹ In this situation could certainly be included those who for some reason were forsaken by relatives and friends. To this list of people who in their affliction turn to Yahweh for help we can add the barren woman (113:9), who as a rule was utterly despised and ill-treated, since hers was a shameful condition in the sight of the community. The experience of Hannah, who prayed for a son at the sanctuary of Shiloh and then became the mother of Samuel (1 Sam 1), serves to illustrate this point.

In fact, the ancient Israelites had a deep concern for shame. Throughout the Lament Psalms the suppliants insistently plead, "let me not be put to shame". If God does not intervene favourably on the petitioner's behalf, his misfortune, already interpreted by others as God's just punishment, will be confirmed as such, and he will be seen as a fake and a hypocrite (cf. 31:1[2], 17[18]). His enemies will then exult over him. The verb *bōš*, "to be ashamed" is used some thirty-four times in the psalms. The extreme anxiety about being utterly ashamed, which is a consequence of being rejected by God in his cause, was an aspect of the suppliant's plight, as seen in 25:1-3:

To you, O Yahweh, I lift up my soul,
 O my God, in you I trust;
 Let me not be put to shame,
 let not my enemies exult over me.
 Indeed, let none that wait for you be put to shame;
 let them be ashamed who are causelessly treacherous.

A phrase that expresses the seriousness of the plight of presumably most of the lamenters in the psalms is *b^enê t^emû^tâ*, literally "the sons of death", meaning "the doomed to die" (102:20[21]; 79:11). This explains the usual strong emotional tone of anguish, anxiety, and despair, which can be sensed in most laments in the Psalter. For most of those afflicted people their cause was not only a matter of shame, but of justice in its extreme form, a matter of life and death.

3.4.2. Trouble Caused by Wicked Oppressors

The plight of the lamenters is sometimes given vivid colours in the usual description of the enemies and their deeds. In fact, references to enemies is by far the most prominent feature of most psalms of lament, and emphasis on them is also found in many psalms of trust, of thanksgiving, and wisdom psalms. This feature is to be seen as forming part of the essential content of the psalms. And it is not only the descriptive elements which are the object of our attention here. Since the idea of punishment in the psalmists' days was based on the principle of equivalence, a "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" system of retribution, the petitions against or curse upon the enemies found in the psalms can be also revealing with respect to the lamenter's plight.

In 17:9, as in many other parts of the Psalter, the enemies are designated as *r^ešā'îm*, "the wicked", sometimes referred to in the singular, *rāšā'*, which can be taken in a literal ("wicked man") or collective sense ("the wicked"). This

is the term which is mostly used to designate the psalmists' enemies in the Psalter (eighty-two times). They are also called *pō'ālē-āwen*, "the workers of iniquity" or "evildoers" (sixteen times), an expression that is sometimes used in parallelism with *rōšā'im*. This word seems to be technically applied to those who pervert the justice due to the poor, such as a malicious witness who makes false charges, causing the innocent and just (or guiltless) to be slain (cf. Ex 23:1,6). Being notably proud and arrogant, indifferent to the Yahwist religious observances or even idolaters, at any rate not abiding by the Covenant laws, they are cultically the ungodly (not to be confused with atheists like those of modern times), the unfaithful, the foolish men, as opposed to the righteous, the faithful, those who are loyal to the Covenant. Thus "wicked" are also all foreign enemies, those who do not know Yahweh. As for the debated expression *pō'ālē-āwen*, instead of designating "sorcerers", those who make use of spells to cause harm to their adversaries, in a technical sense, as proposed by Mowinckel,⁹⁰ the reference seems to be to the wicked in so far as they plot and carry out their evil schemes, which in some cases might well include sorcery.

The enemies are also denoted by some other words which are variously translated as "enemy", "foe", and "adversary". They come from three different roots. The term *'ōyēb* (seventy-four times in the Psalter, including one psalm title), is participle of *'āyab*, and signifies "one who is hostile to". From the verb *šārar* (II), "to show hostility toward, harass, oppress", we have the noun *šar* (twenty-seven times), and the participial form *šōrēr* (twelve times). From a third root, *śn'*, "to hate", come the participle *śōnē'* (ten times). Thus, in general terms, the enemies of the psalmists are understood as those who are hostile to them, who hate and oppress them. For Barth, those who used the psalms, although portraying the enemies in the exaggerated colours and

dimensions of a traditional "prototype", "had in mind the concrete realities of human life: hypocrites, mockers, slanderers, unbelievers, anti-social landowners, violent abusers of authority, unjust nobles, and presumably evil sorcerers as well".⁹¹ It is not difficult to realize the different types of problems that such people could cause to the poor and weak.

After asking for deliverance from the fury of the wicked who greedily assail and surround him, the psalmist of Ps 17 adds the following description (vv. 10-12):

They are clogged with the arrogance of their hearts,
with their mouth they speak proudly.
They have tracked me down; now they surround me;
they set their eyes to cast (me) to the ground.
Each one is like a lion which is eager to tear,
and like a young lion crouching in ambush.

But it is in Ps 10:2-11 that we find a more complete portrayal of the wicked, stressing his actions and pointing to his victims:

In arrogance the wicked hotly pursue the poor (*'ānî*);
let them be caught in the schemes which they have
devised.
For the wicked boasts of the desires of his heart,
and the greedy man curses and despises Yahweh.
In the pride of his countenance the wicked does not seek
him;
and all his thoughts are, "There is no God".
His ways prosper at all times;
your judgments are on high, out of his sight;
as for all his foes (*šôr^orîm*), he puffs at them.
He thinks in his heart, "I shall not be moved;
throughout all generations I shall not meet adversity".
His mouth is full of cursing, and deceit and oppression;
under his tongue are mischief and iniquity.
He sits in ambush in the villages;
in hiding places he murders the innocent (*nāqî*).
His eyes stealthily watch for the hapless (*hēl^okâ*),
he lurks in secret like a lion in his covert;
he lurks that he may seize the poor (*'ānî*),
he seizes the poor (*'ānî*) when he draws him into his net.
The hapless (*hēl^okâ*) is crushed, sinks down,
and falls by his might.

He thinks in his heart, "God has forgotten,
he has hidden his face, he will never see it".

The wicked's pride and arrogance can be understood in reference to their self-sufficiency and extreme self-confidence (cf. 49:13[14]). Being rich and powerful (cf. 49:5-6[6-7]), they do not fear God, but defy him by pursuing and crushing the poor, like fierce and cruel wild beasts (cf. 7:2[3]; 10:9; 17:12; 22:12[13]; 57:4[5]; 58:6[7]; etc.) which lurk for their prey, and when in trouble they do not feel the need to seek God's help, for they are quite able to get rid of their own foes easily by simply "puffing at" them. Whereas the wicked make use of "hiding places" to lurk and kill the innocent poor, these have in Yahweh their "hiding place" for protection against the schemes of the wicked.

The victims of the wicked are here aptly described in generic terms as the poor and hapless. Once fallen into the power of the wicked (like a prey which is caught in the net of a hunter or in the claws of a lion), whose well plotted schemes include slander, lies, accusations, bribery, and violence (ranging from harassment to either coldblooded murder or "legal" execution based on false charges; cf. 94:20-21), the poor resort to Yahweh, bringing their cry before him in the sanctuary. Further descriptions of the wicked, which shed light on the understanding of the plight of the lamenters, are found, for instance, in 36:1-4[2-6]; 50:16-23; 94:1-7, 20-21; and 109:2-5, 22-25.

Following the regular pattern of the lament, as exemplified in several psalms, the petitioner of Ps 17 prays not only to be delivered from the hands of his enemies, but also for their destruction (vv. 13-14) in a rather vindictive and shocking fashion. This fact can only be explained in the light of the Israelite concept of judgment and salvation. As it was in the experience of Exodus, the salvation of the oppressed is only fully accomplished when it

emcompasses the punishment of the unjust party. Blessing and cursing are fundamental, correlative elements in the traditional Covenant centered faith of the Old Testament. As Barth aptly says,

The influence of the traditional language of the cult--in this case the ancient formulas of cursing, such as were used at the making of the covenant, at the feast of the renewal of the covenant or after the reading of the law--is much wider and more powerful in the psalms than is usually admitted at the present time.⁹²

If the wicked, the unjust, the evildoers are not punished for their evil deeds, God is deemed unfaithful and unable to save. At the cry of the afflicted, as Westermann rightly points out, "God's hearkening had two sides: if God intervened for the righteous, this was at the same time an intervention against the enemies"⁹³ (cf. 72:4). And

. . . the case for or against the righteous *had to be* decided on this earth, in the lifetimes of the individual righteous persons. No other possibility as yet existed for them. For this reason there was also no possibility to glorify and magnify God in suffering and in death.⁹⁴

For the psalmists all praise of God cease at death (115:17; 6:5[6]). Thus the punishment of the evildoer seems to be a question of vital importance, a crucial point of faith in the Old Testament. And since such punishment is always supposed to correspond in nature to the evil practised (cf. 9:15[16]; 10:2; 7:14-16[15-17]; 35:7-8; 94:23; 109:6-20), the petitions and/or curses against the enemies can often be taken as pointing to the petitioner's plight. In other words, the evil that the wicked do to the innocent, the misfortunes that they cause to the poor and weak must in justice--the psalmists believe--turn back to themselves. Thus the petitioners' desire against the wicked is an expression of the misfortunes the weak normally suffer in the

hands of their enemies. Perhaps no other text illustrates this fact better than Ps 109, especially vv. 6-20, most of which we quote below:

Appoint a wicked man against him;
 and let an accuser stand at his right hand.
 When he is tried, let him go out guilty (*rāšā'*);
 and let his prayer be counted as sin!
 May his days be few;
 may another seize his possessions!⁹⁵
 May his sons be fatherless,
 and his wife a widow!
 May his children wander about and beg;
 out of the ruins they inhabit,
 may they seek *sustenance*!⁹⁶
 May the creditor seize all that he has;
 may strangers plunder the fruits of his toil!
 Let there be none to extend kindness to him,
 nor any to pity his fatherless children!
 May his posterity be cut off;
 may his name be blotted out in the next generation!⁹⁷

 For he did not remember to show kindness,
 but pursued the poor and needy
 and the brokenhearted to their death.
 He loved to curse; let curses come on him!
 he did not like blessing; may it be far from him!

 May this be the reward of my accusers from Yahweh,
 of those who speak evil against my life.

If we either take the long list of maledictions as being uttered by the psalmist in the form of an imprecation against his oppressors, which is most likely, or even as a quotation of the curses uttered by the latter, as argued by Kraus,⁹⁸ at any rate, forming a picture of utter misfortune and disgrace, they give us a good hint of the psalmist's plight, including his fears of what was in store for him if not acquitted by Yahweh.⁹⁹

3.4.3. The Assurance and Celebration of Deliverance

But in the prayers of the afflicted one does not only see darkness and despair. Expressions of confidence and hope are also very much in evidence. We have already seen a short sample of these in Ps 17:15, "As for me, I shall

behold your face in justice; and be satisfied with the rising of your countenance". Ps 13:5[6] has, "But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation". The petitioner of Ps 27 also shows great confidence, "I believe that I shall see the goodness of Yahweh in the land of the living!" He is sure that there will be justice for him before he goes to Sheol or the underworld, where--it is believed--there is no hope (resurrection in the sense of being brought back to life is not contemplated in the psalms; for the psalmists it is rather the experience whereby the dying are pulled back from Sheol before they die). Examples could be multiplied of demonstrations of confidence in the Lord amidst serious trouble and distress. In fact in some cases the element of confidence became so predominant that a number of psalms came to be known as psalms of trust or confidence (11; 16; 23; 27:1-6; 62; 63; 71; 131). Nevertheless, they are to be taken as nothing else than a subtype of the psalms of lament, for this is the *Gattung* which offers the right background over against which they can be properly interpreted.

Quite understandably, these psalms, because of their strong and eloquent expression of confidence and hope in God, are among those which became mostly cherished by the Christian Church. Among these Ps 23 is perhaps the most popular, but the inspiring message of confidence found in the others as well, can be equally appreciated. Ps 62 is an example, of which we quote vv. 5-7[6-8]:

For God alone my soul waits in silence,
 for my hope is from him.
 He only is my rock and my salvation,
 my fortress; I shall not be shaken.
 On God rests my deliverance and my honour;
 my mighty rock, my refuge is God.

These verses, along with vv. 1-2[2-3] form a sort of refrain, or perhaps

they are variants on the same theme. It is interesting to observe the nature of the contrast which they make with v. 10[11] (which is part of a wisdom-like word of exhortation to the people to put their confidence in God as stated in the aforementioned verses):

Put no confidence in extortion,
 set no vain hopes on robbery;
 set not your heart on increasing riches.¹⁰⁰

Whereas the wicked trust in (or give themselves over to) extortion or robbery, and rely on the power of their ill-gotten riches, the psalmist patiently and trustfully waits on God. When a wicked man falls down the righteous see in this the hand of God and can make use of it as an example to boost his own convictions and his teaching:

See the man who would not make God his refuge,
 but trusted in the abundance of his riches,
 and sought refuge in his wealth!
 (52:7[9])

Confidence and hope are also often expressed in the form of a vow of praise, which is an element ordinarily found in the psalms of lament of the individual. In the hope that his cause shall be upheld by God, the suppliant promises to give a testimony of his deliverance before the congregation in the sanctuary, as a public act of praise and thanksgiving. It can be short as in 26:12b, "In the great congregation I will bless the Lord", or longer as in 109:30-31:

With my mouth I will give great thanks to Yahweh;
 I will praise him in the midst of the throng.
 For he stands at the right hand of the needy,
 to save him from those who condemn him to death.

The vow sounds just like a simple promise to be grateful if things go well

for the petitioner in his ordeal, as in Ps 35. After cursing his enemies, the psalmist prays that those who desire his vindication may (obviously at the realization of their wish) shout for joy and be glad, and adds, "Then my tongue shall tell of your justice, and of your praises all the day long" (v. 28). Perhaps this could be said of other psalms where the vow seems loosely appended to the poem (7:17[18]; 26:12b) or associated with generic expressions of confidence (52:8-9[10-11]; 109:30-31). However, since most often the vow is found connected with expressions which indicate that the psalmist's prayer has somehow already been answered (22:22-31[23-32]; 54:4-7[6-9]; 56:8-13[9-14]; 57:5-11[6-12]; 59:16-17[17-18]; 61:4-8[5-9]; 69:30-36[31-37]; 71:18b-24; 86:6-13)¹⁰¹, it is quite possible that in both cases the so-called "change of mood" in the lament psalms, of which the vow is part, is determined by an oracle of hope promising deliverance, uttered by a priest or cultic prophet.¹⁰² A possible example of such an oracle, also called "oracle of salvation", is found in 27:14 (cf. also 55:22[23]):

Wait for Yahweh;
be strong and let your heart take courage;
yea, wait for Yahweh!

It is possible that the content of such oracles would have varied between words of encouragement and assurance, involving a promise of deliverance, and the utterance of a final decision when a simple confirmation of the suppliant's guilt or innocence was the expected outcome from the cultic ritual. At any rate we can say that something must have taken place in the cult which suddenly led the lamenter to a marked change of mood, to positively affirm that Yahweh has heard his prayer and delivered him, sometimes following expressions of praise and thanksgiving. One clear example of such conviction, although not followed by a vow of praise, is Ps 6:8-10[9-11]:

Depart from me, all you evildoers;
 for Yahweh has heard the voice of my weeping.
 Yahweh has heard my supplication;
 Yahweh accepts my prayer.
 All my enemies shall be ashamed and greatly troubled;
 they shall turn back, and be ashamed in a moment.

That the cry of the afflicted found a favourable reply in the realm of the Israelite cultic institutions, from where deliverance for the poor and needy was dispensed by Yahweh himself, is given testimony to by those many psalms in which the lamenting changes into praise, by the abundant expressions (and entire psalms) of trust or confidence, and especially by the psalms of thanksgiving (9; 18; 30; 31:7-8[8-9], 18-24[19-25]; 32; 40:1-12[2-13]; 66:13-20; 92; 107?; 116; 118?; 138). These psalms are also called psalms of declarative (or narrative) praise of the individual, and correspond to the psalms of lament of the individual. They belong together like two acts of a drama, or two sides of a coin. In the lament the petitioner raises his cry for help; in the psalm of declarative praise he presents a thank-offering to Yahweh and praises him for his deliverance, which has already been accomplished, thus fulfilling his promises:

I will come into your house with burnt offerings;
 I will pay you my vows,
 that which my lips uttered
 and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.
 (66:13-14)

These sacrificial celebrations, involving a sacrificial meal (cf. 22:26[27]), were observed in the courtyard of the temple (cf. 116:19). By reciting or singing an appropriate psalm, perhaps during the sacrifice offering, the liberated lamenter fulfills his vows in the presence of other worshippers (116:18) who are sometimes summoned to join in the act of praise (33:3[4]; 30:4[5]). A prominent feature of this celebration of deliverance is its character

of a public testimony to Yahweh's acts of salvation. This is the fuel that feeds and energizes the faith and hope of other poor and still afflicted worshippers, as suggested by Ps 34:2-6[3-7]):

My soul makes its boast in Yahweh;
let the afflicted hear and be glad.
O magnify Yahweh with me,
and let us exalt his name together!
I sought Yahweh, and he answered me,
and delivered me from all my fears.
Look to him, and be radiant;
so your faces shall never be ashamed.
This poor man cried, and Yahweh heard him,
and saved him out of his troubles.

PART II

HOPE FOR THE POOR AND OPPRESSED

For the needy shall not always be forgotten,
and the hope of the poor shall not perish for ever.
(Ps 9:18[19])

CHAPTER 4

THE QUESTION OF FUTURE HOPE IN THE PSALMS

4.1. SCOPE AND NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

Although in the previous chapters the cry motif was our main object of attention, from time to time, however, the element of hope emerged, as both concepts are related. It is not out of anguish and anxiety alone that the cry of the poor and oppressed is uttered, but also out of hope in the expectation that justice will eventually be carried out by God.

From now on we shall shift the main focus of our attention to the element of hope (i.e. hope of justice) as seen in the psalms and the prophets, where the expectation of justice is not only a question related to the concrete, historical situations of the present (nonetheless with obvious implications for the future), but also and more conspicuously a matter of future or "eschatological" hope,¹ when the plenitude of God's *mišpāl*, *šedeq* and *š^o dāqā* shall be seen on earth.

This element of hope which came to be developed in the ancient Israelite faith is here taken as an answer to the ages long existential cry of the poor and oppressed. The frustrating lack of a full solution to the problem of injustice in the historical present of the people of God leads them to envisage a time in the remote future, by the amplification of elements of their faith in and experience of God's justice and salvation, when finally a social and cosmic equilibrium will be attained through the mediation of God's representative, or the Anointed One.

In some way this and the next chapter may be considered as development or expansion of the previous one, where the hope of those who cry for justice is viewed within the scope of a short or medium term. Here, on the other hand, the cry motif and the expectation of justice will be primarily treated in the light of the future hope of Israel.

Seemingly one of the few points of consensus among Old Testament critical scholars is that the psalms in their original setting were associated with concrete situations, experiences, and rites in the orbit of the ancient Israelite cultus. Notwithstanding, the fact that references or openness to the future, even a remote future, very often emerge in different types of psalms cannot be overlooked.

The expectation of the future which is here expressed became even more significant when succeeding generations read and used the psalms with an attempt to make sense of their message within new historical contingencies. The remote future became the screen over against which different elements and motifs, whether or not originally "eschatological" in nature, were projected by an ever growing universalistic faith.

For instance, the concrete experience of those who awake in the morning after a night spent in the temple to face God's judgment in the hope of vindication or salvation from death in view of false accusations, as observed in some lament psalms, was with all probability the objective element which, through an inductive process in the development of Israel's faith over generations, contributed to the chrystalization of the notions of resurrection, final judgment, and spiritual salvation, as observed in the Book of Daniel and the New Testament. In a similar way, the original messianic ideal, restricted to the historic Davidic dynasty, was broadened and projected towards the remote

future, the same occurring with all the eschatological motifs in the Psalter.

Would it be proper to call this outlook to the remote future in the Psalter *eschatological hope* as some authors do, or should we better adopt what seems to be a sober and less controversial designation such as *future hope*? After briefly dealing with this question, which is pertinent to our subject, we shall point out the major sources of the material related to hope in the Psalter, according to the psalm types in which they are found.

4.2. FUTURE HOPE OR ESCHATOLOGY?

There are some Old Testament scholars who take the word "eschatology" in a narrow sense, like George Fohrer, for instance, for whom it would be restricted to the exilic and post-exilic periods.² Still narrower is the way Mowinckel defines it, i.e., as it is understood in dogmatic theology, as a developed doctrine about the "last things". Therefore, according to his opinion one can actually talk about eschatology only from the post-exilic period on.³

Although most recent Old Testament scholars do not seem to share such a narrow definition, a certain measure of caution is required, however, when we talk about eschatology in the Psalter. In spite of the criticism to which some of Mowinckel's ideas have been submitted, his cult functional interpretation of the psalms has had an undeniable influence upon most modern scholars, following the master lines of Hermann Gunkel's revolutionary form-criticism or type-history approach, which started a new era in the study of the psalms.

In his fundamental work, *Einleitung in die Psalmen*, Gunkel dedicated a large section to the theme of eschatology.⁴ His eschatological interpretation was criticized by Mowinckel who saw in it a revival of the earlier exegesis of the Church, which—as he says—is always in pursuit of "messianic prophecies".

But yet he does not sound too negative when he explains:

The answer to the question whether the Psalter includes eschatological psalms or not, depends of course to a certain degree on the definition of the word "eschatology". The present author cannot approve the diffuse definitions of many scholars, according to which eschatology includes nearly every sort of national aspirations and wishes and beliefs about a splendid and lucky, but quite intramundane future. . . . the belief that there always will be a "future" for Yahweh's elected people is no eschatology. It is, at most, to use Toynbee's expression, "futurism". . . .

The answer depends, however, also on what is meant by an "eschatological psalm". This term seems commonly to mean a poem with the expressed purpose of describing "the last things"--a literary "prophecy" or a contemplation of the final catastrophe . . . or a poem in which the author imagines himself living in the eschatological age, as if it had already arrived, and gives vent to his own feelings and those of the congregation at this experience. When talking of eschatological psalms Gunkel is thinking of the later category, and he is right in saying that it does exist, namely in the prophets, where it serves as impressive clothing for the prophecy. . . . In the Psalms, on the other hand, there is no indication whatever that the authors wish them to be interpreted as prophecies. This does not mean that there are not psalms in the proper sense of the word which contain eschatological motifs or some outlook to the more remote future.⁵

Mowinckel seems to be reacting against some extreme positions, and he himself later recognized that he over-reacted against what he calls the vagueness of many scholars' definition of eschatology. He even came to admit that the eschatological interpretation of Gunkel had some truth in it, to which he had not previously done justice.⁶ Perhaps his problem resided in the fact that, due to his narrow conceptualization of eschatology and his apparently exclusive interest in the cultic interpretation of the psalms, he tended to see both approaches (cultic and eschatological) as mutually exclusive.

It seems to be a common trend among most recent scholars to use the word "eschatology" in a broad sense. Philip Davies' definition, followed by

David Hubbard,⁷ seems appropriate to express this position:

Eschatology, as I define it, is not a *doctrine*; it is a dimension of belief available to an individual or group who are convinced that history moves in a direction, that this direction is set by God, and that God acts within history to ensure this direction.⁸

John Bright also follows this trend. He refers to eschatology in terms of the characteristic and unique orientation toward the future, a future hope, that Israel's faith had from a very early period. He appropriately explains that

This is certainly not eschatology in the later Jewish, or Christian, sense. There is no suprahistorical termination of things, no end of the world (end of age). On the contrary, the terminus is on this earth, within history. But it is a terminus, the introduction of a situation discontinuous with the current evil one, the consummation of the divine purpose beyond which there was no need to look, and beyond which the prophets in fact did not look.⁹

Among other scholars who, like John Bright, acknowledge a pre-exilic eschatology, are von Rad, Clements, and Lindblom.¹⁰ Vriezen, who distinguishes four main periods regarding eschatology in the Old Testament, calls "pre-eschatological" the period before the classical prophets and "proto-eschatological" the period of Isaiah and his contemporaries.¹¹

It follows that once a broader definition of eschatology is assumed, what Mowinckel calls "futurism", "future hope", "hope of restoration", "eschatological motifs", and "outlook to the more remote future" in regard to the psalms could be called eschatology without any difficulty. And at times this terminology, in a noun or adjectival form, proves to be very handy. But since its appropriateness at least in regard to the psalms, in particular, has been with some reason disputed by Mowinckel, and might still be looked on by some with a justifiable measure of reservation, we find it proper to avoid its use at

large, and even in the few instances where it does appear, where otherwise the sense of "future hope" would apply, inverted commas are also employed.

4.3. SOURCES OF FUTURE HOPE IN THE PSALMS

Let us now briefly examine the groups or types of psalms in which are found most of the elements related to Israel's future hope.

4.3.1. The Enthronement Psalms

According to Gunkel's classification, the "Songs of Enthronement" are mixed types, and are found in Psalms 47, 93, 96-99 (to which Mowinckel adds 81 and 95). Arguing from their content, Gunkel called them "eschatological hymns".¹²

They celebrate God's universal reign. The introductory shout, *Yahweh mālāk* ("The Lord reigns!" or "The Lord is king!") which appears in some of them is translated by Mowinckel as "The Lord has become king!", in connection with his hypothesis of a festival of Yahweh's enthronement. He assumed that this feast was originally one aspect of the old agricultural feast of harvest and new year, usually called the feast of Tabernacles (Lv 23:33-36), occurring probably in the seventh day. This feast, celebrated from the times of the early monarchy, would have been the background of the enthronement psalms. He recognizes that no particular day called after the feast of Yahweh's enthronement is expressly mentioned in the texts, but he states:

From the very principle of cultic interpretation it is plain that a "feast of Yahweh's enthronement" must have existed, the main foci of which must have been Yahweh's enthronement and his kingship, based on his victory over the powers of chaos and the primeval ocean, and the creation, repetition and re-experience of these "facts of salvation" in and through the festival, and further, the renewal of the historical "salvation": the election, the deliverance from Egypt, and the making of the covenant. The most prominent

act of this festival was the great procession with its dramatic and symbolic character, the personal presence of Yahweh being symbolized by the ark.¹³

Though Mowinckel's hypothesis seemed to be widely accepted at first, through the years it has been criticized by several scholars in many points. A major challenge was presented by the German scholar Hans-Joachim Kraus. He questioned Mowinckel's interpretation grammatically, cultically, theologically and exegetically.¹⁴

The futuristic character of the enthronement psalms, along with their historical dimension (God's past deliverance), is stressed not only by Gunkel, but also by Kraus and Mowinckel. Even in their early cultic use, their major point of reference is the future, at least the coming new year, as they convey the hope that, under God's control, justice and harmony will return on earth. Whether taken this way or as later interpreted (God coming in a remote future to inaugurate a new era), these psalms express the expectation of God's future intervention to push back chaos and right wrongs. In the realm of Israel's faith and historical experience, new hopes for a new year can easily become the hope of a new era.

The nature and cultic use of these psalms are such that their "eschatological" interpretation cannot be overlooked. Westermann correctly explains that

The liturgical and eschatological interpretation of these psalms are not mutually exclusive. Borrowing the customs and imagery of the enthronement of an earthly ruler, the community celebrated in these psalms the future inauguration of God's royal rule over the entire world, anticipating the fulfilment of the promise in liturgical jubilation.¹⁵

Westermann, however, considers the enthronement psalms to be post-exilic, concluding that they are patterned after the "eschatological song of praise" of Isaiah 52:7-10.¹⁶ For Mowinckel just one or another enthronement psalm may be of post-exilic origin, and in addition he believes that the second part of Isaiah is a witness that this psalm type existed in pre-exilic days.¹⁷

The common features of these psalms are as follows:

1) The expression or cultic cry "The Lord reigns!" or "The Lord has become king!", found in all but Ps 98 (in Mowinckel's opinion, the fact that Yahweh is always recognized as king--like other deities, as early as ancient Sumerian times--does not invalidate the fact that at a certain time he became king. He argues that "to the Israelite way of thinking there is no contradiction between this and that he is king for ever; such a contradiction is modern and rationalistic".);¹⁸

2) a call to the nations and creation to praise Yahweh, in the form of an exaltation in the plural, as for example in 96:1: "Sing to Yahweh a new song; sing to Yahweh, all the earth!"

3) references to Yahweh's reign over the entire world, as in 47:2-3[3-4], 7-8[8-9];

4) the motivations for the praise: God's epiphany or his coming in power (97:2-5); God's splendour, majesty and holiness (96:6-9); God's justice among his people (99:4); God's coming to judge the nations in justice (98:9); God's wonderful deeds of salvation or liberation (98:1-3; 99:6-8; 47:3[4]).

4.3.2. The Royal Psalms

The royal psalms do not constitute a special type of psalms. Scattered throughout the Psalter, they comprise different kinds of psalms. Their basic, common feature is that in them the king plays a role. He is the one who prays or who is prayed for, or the one who is spoken of. These are the psalms which have traditionally been ascribed to this category: Pss 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132, 144. We have already referred to the fact that Eaton includes many other psalms, but in most cases the evidence is not totally convincing.

Viewing the royal psalms from a canonical standpoint, Childs appropriately makes explicit their connection with the messianic hope:

Although the royal psalms arose originally in a peculiar historical setting of ancient Israel which had received its form from a common mythopoetic milieu, they were treasured in the Psalter for a different reason, namely as a witness to the messianic hope which looked for the consummation of God's kingship through his Anointed One.¹⁹

This has been the traditional Jewish and Christian viewpoint, for whom these psalms are "messianic", i.e. they are of a prophetic nature which points to the Messiah, the Anointed One (identified by the early Church as Jesus of Nazareth). However, for the purposes of historical critical research, they are simply "royal psalms", a genre also attested in ancient Egyptian and Babylonian literatures, i.e. a type of psalms referring to the reigning Israelite or Judean kings, the origin of which is assigned to a specific cultic historical setting which reflects the ancient Near Eastern royal ideology.²⁰ Thus the portrait of the king in the royal psalms is of an ideal ruler. In other words, it could be said that the king is described as he actually should be according to the view of the religious circles of the psalmists' days.

When the subject is carefully examined, however, one reaches the conclusion that the historical critical approach does not necessarily invalidate the messianic interpretation of the royal psalms. In fact, it offers to the latter a basis on which the origin of the messianic expectation can be better appreciated. From the perspective of the New Year Festival, with which the royal psalms might have been associated, they were bound to have an orientation toward the future in terms of hope. Stressing the king's responsibility for the maintenance of justice, some of them function as a receptacle of new hopes for a new reign, conveying the expectation that a just society may emerge in which the poor are protected and the evildoers punished. Such an ideal, sooner or later, if not from the start, was bound to become "eschatological". Mowinckel himself points to this fact, although pushing the conceptual leap into a later stage:

Just because the royal psalms describe the ideal in the light of the religion, it is not without justification that later Judaism has given them a messianic interpretation, and the Church has taken the psalms' pictures of the king as prophecies of Christ. They sprang from the need for a super-human helper and saviour, the fulfilment of which is Jesus Christ.²¹

It is probable that many more royal psalms existed in the days of Israel's pre-exilic monarchy, to which they are commonly dated. The preservation of several of them in the Psalter in post-exilic times bears witness to the fact that--as already pointed out by Childs--they were interpreted as referring to the long-awaited king of the future. No one of David's sons could fulfill all the ideal hopes expressed in the royal psalms in terms of the maintenance of justice, prosperity, and universal dominion. The continuous disappointment in face of the harsh facts of life, regarding both the quality and prestige of the

Davidic rulers and other historical ambiguities, led the people of God to raise their eyes in hope to a more remote future, thus developing a messianic-eschatological expectation.

It seems certain that this shift of perspective did not happen abruptly. Rather, it must have been the result of a slow, gradual process down the centuries, following the natural development of Israel's faith, and an overlap of both historical and "eschatological" perspectives is expected to have taken place. There are those who tend to see in the royal psalms the evidence for a kind of early messianism in pre-exilic times. They assume that during Israel's early monarchy there existed a kind of immediate messianic expectation based on Nathan's oracle (2 Sam 7:1-17), according to which each king of the Davidic dynasty was a candidate for messiahship. As a representative of this line, Sabourin states that "As a candidate to the messianic dignity every Davidic prince was expected to embody the ideal Israelite monarch".²² Delitzsch has expressed an apparently similar idea in a more detailed and clearer fashion:

In the time of David and of Solomon the hope of believers, which was attached to the kingship of David, had not yet fully broken with the present. At that time, with few exceptions, nothing was known of any other Messiah than the Anointed One of God, who was David or Solomon himself. When, however, the kingship in these its two most glorious impersonations had proved itself unable to bring to full realization the idea of the Messiah or of the Anointed One of God, and when the line of kings that followed thoroughly disappointed the hope which clung to the kingship of the present,--a hope which here and there, as in the reign of Hezekiah, blazed up for a moment and then totally died out, and men were driven from the present to look onward into the future,--then, and not until then, did any decided rupture take place between the messianic hope and the present. The image of the Messiah is now painted on the pure ethereal sky of the future . . .²³

However we explain the future hope of God's people in pre-exilic times in

regard to the royal psalms, an interesting relation between history and future hope remains: that which was historically ideal came to be "eschatological", once projected by hope into the future; seen from the other perspective, that which could only have been "eschatological", beyond the possibility of immediate historical fulfilment, was certainly seen as historically ideal, a pattern, a scale by which the king and his reign was to be measured. So, from the perspective of the royal psalms the future hope of Israel is not to be seen as concerned with a totally supra-historical reality. This reality has its roots in history and, at the same time, has historical applications. Its fundamental ideal of justice, for instance, is a challenge to be answered, a goal to be achieved, a principle of judgment to be applied.

The royal psalms are generally classified according to the various kinds of public worship on which they were sung:

1) *Weddings*. Psalm 45 is an ancient song sung during the king's wedding public ceremony.

2) *Coronations*. Psalms 2, 72, 101, and 110 were sung at the king's enthronement and/or at anniversaries of royal accession. Psalm 101 represents a solemn vow that the king himself used to make on the day of his enthronement.

3) *Prayers before or after battle*. Psalms 20, 21, 89, and 144 were probably sung by the choir to petition Yahweh for victory when the king went forth to battle. An oracle assuring God's blessings may at times have been uttered by a priest or a prophet (cp. II Ch 20:14-17). Psalm 18 is a thanksgiving prayer of a king upon his return from a overwhelming victorious campaign.

According to Gunkel, Ps 132 (not classified among the others above) is "a

song performed in the royal sanctuary on the occasion of the anniversary of the establishing of that sanctuary and of the founding of the kingdom".²⁴ It seems to have been part of a special liturgical event when God's choice of Mount Zion and David's dynasty was celebrated.

4.3.3. Other Groups of Psalms

The material with a reference to the future (or which came to be thus interpreted) is chiefly, but not exclusively, found in the enthronement psalms and the royal psalms. It can also be found anywhere else in the Psalter in other types of psalms interwoven with material of diverse nature. Though without general acceptance, as we have already stressed, many other psalms have also been considered royal psalms. This is the case, for instance, as we saw, of most individual psalms of lament.²⁵ However, the issue of how many and which of them could be accepted as royal psalms is beside the point. At any rate there remains the fact that an opening to the future in terms of hope is usually found in them.

It is true that in this type of psalm, as was emphasized in our previous chapter, we have complaints concerning the psalmist's present plight, pleas for help and expressions of confidence in God. However, in order to find comfort, in many of these psalms the psalmist does not reflect on past events, but lifts his eyes in hope toward the future, when God will perform new wondrous deeds of liberation. On the other side, reflections on the past have no use other than to feed hope for God's acts of deliverance in the future. In Hubbard's appropriate words, "the rescue which that hope anticipates has sweeping--eschatological-like--implications for a wide audience and future generations (Ps. 22)"²⁶, who are also called "a people yet unborn" (22:31[32]), "a people not yet created" (102:18[19]), a generation of the future when the

earth and the heavens will wear out like a garment and will be changed like clothing (102:25-26[26-27]).

The "eschatological" motif of a lament psalm (which usually reminds us of the prophetic hope, as in Ps 22) is normally found illogically juxtaposed to other characteristic parts of the psalm, probably belonging to an oracle which, as widely admitted, explains its usual change in tone. "However one explains it", concludes Childs viewing the issue from a canonical standpoint, "the final form of the Psalter is highly eschatological in nature. It looks toward the future and passionately yearns for its arrival. Even when the psalmist turns briefly to reflect on the past in praise of the 'great things which Yahweh has done', invariably the movement shifts and again the hope of salvation is projected into the future (Ps. 126:6). The perspective of Israel's worship in the Psalter in its canonical form, far from being different in kind from the prophetic message, joins with the prophets in announcing God's coming kingship".²⁷

Another group of psalms in which "eschatological" notes can be found are the Songs of Zion (Pss 46, 48, 76, 84, 87, 122), which extol Zion, God's "holy mountain" (48:2[3]), "the city of God" (46:5[6]; 48:2[3]). A very interesting combination of creation and history with an eye open to the future is found in Ps 46. The historic-eschatological importance of Zion is due to the fact that it is Yahweh's dwelling place (76:2[3]), the city of the Great King (48:2[3]), the seat of the ideal Davidic king, the place from where, as expressed in terms of hope, he will judge the nations and save all the poor of the earth (Ps 76). A clearer picture of this can be seen in Ps 72, a royal psalm which shall be studied in our following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

THE EXPECTATION OF A JUST KING IN THE PSALMS

As we have seen, the Lament Psalms along with their counterpart, the Psalms of Thanksgiving, point to the existence of cultic institutions in ancient Israel which represented a kind of hope for the poor and oppressed, at least in regard to particular times of trouble, especially when the oppressive deeds of the wicked, chiefly the rich and powerful, would include false accusations of serious crimes which could incur the death penalty.

As the defence of the weak and the poor was part of the royal ideology, and in fact constituted the main *raison d'être* of the royal institution, the hope of the poor was also connected with the public system of administration of justice headed by the king himself as chief magistrate. However, it goes without saying that such a system was not only imperfect, but quite often corrupted and unreliable, as we have already pointed out, like a medicine that causes the disease it is supposed to heal.

In time the high ideals and expectations attached to royalty became a matter of future hope, had it not already concomitantly such a character from the very beginning, i.e. from the time of David and Solomon, as could be supposed from Nathan's oracle (2 Sam 7). Effective justice for the poor and oppressed would finally be accomplished by the special Anointed One of Yahweh or Messiah to come, who would inaugurate a golden age, an era of fulness of justice and integral prosperity.

It has to be said that the expectation of justice—one of the most evident features of the psalms—was not simply a fruit of the poetic imagination, but rather something that came out of the life of the covenant people, like the psalms themselves which sprang from the living cultic experience of the ancient Israelites. In this connection future hope cannot be conceived as an alienation from the present, an escapism to a remote and hidden future. It is rather the assurance of an ideal future which is rooted in history and which affects life experience throughout history. In the hope of a coming just king present and future are related; the ideals of the future are the ideals of the present, and vice-versa. The practice of justice which is to be seen now shall be seen later, and vice-versa. In other words, everything the psalms have to say about justice is applicable to the kingdom to come, the kingdom of the poor.

Again we approach the psalms on two different levels. Our first section will present a study of Ps 72, undoubtedly the best royal psalm for dealing with the theme of justice from a historic and a "messianic-eschatological" perspective, i.e. expressing both wishes and aspirations for the present and expectations for the future. The second section will consider the main themes of the psalm within a wider perspective, taking the whole psalter into account. Our basic interest here is to clarify what the expected era of justice under the Anointed One of Yahweh is all about, involving issues such as the nature of justice as seen in the psalms; the objects of the king's concern; and the kind of world order that the fulness of justice manifested in his reign will bring about. Central to the whole issue is naturally the cause of the poor, as we shall see.

5.1. PSALM 72: A PRAYER FOR THE KING WHO CARES FOR THE POOR

5.1.1. Psalm 72 in Translation

(A Psalm) of Solomon

1. O God, give your judgment^a to the king,^b
and your justice to the son of the king!^b
2. May he judge^a your people^b with justice,
and your poor^b with judgment!
3. Let the mountains bring forth peace to the people,
and the hills, through^a justice!
4. May he judge the poor of the people,
deliver the sons of the needy,^a
and crush the oppressor!^b
5. And may he live^a with the sun,^b
and before the moon^b through all generations!^b
6. May he descend like rain on the mown grass,
like showers that water^a the earth!
7. Let justice^a flourish in his days,
and peace abound till the moon be no more!^b
8. And may he rule from sea to sea,
and from the river unto the ends of the earth!
9. May his adversaries^a bow down before him,
and his enemies lick the dust!
10. May the kings of Tarshish and of the islands bring
(him) gifts,
may the kings of Sheba and Seba offer (him)
presents!
11. May all kings bow down before him,
may all the nations serve him!
12. ^aFor he shall deliver the needy who cries out,^b
the poor and him who has no helper.^c
13. He shall have compassion on the weak and the needy,^a
and save the lives of the needy.
14. From oppression and violence^a he shall redeem their
lives,
and their blood^b shall be precious in his sight.

15. So (long) may he live,
and may there be given to him^a of the gold of Sheba!
May men pray for him continually,
may they bless him all day long!
16. Let there be abundance^a of grain in the land;
let its fruit wave (even) on the mountain tops like
Lebanon;
may men blossom from the city like the herb of the
earth!
17. May his name be for ever,
may his name^a endure as long as the sun!
May men bless themselves in him,
may all nations call him blessed!
18. ^aBlessed be Yahweh God, the God of Israel,
who alone does wondrous things!
19. And blessed be his glorious name for ever;
and may the whole earth be filled with his glory!
Amen and Amen!
20. Here end the prayers of David, son of Jesse.^a

5.1.2. Textual and Explanatory Notes

1.a MT has *mišpātêkâ*, "your judgments", which could be also rendered "your statutes" or "your ordinances". However, as four ancient versions (LXX, Jer, Syr, and Tg) read *mišpāt^ekâ*, "your judgment", and the word is in parallelism with *šidqāt^ekâ*, "your justice", the form in the singular is sometimes preferred. If we take *mišpāt* in the plural (as in MT), it may be alluding to the handing over of the written law to the king, as part of the enthronement liturgy, as suggested by Dt 17:18–20 and 1 Sam 10:25 (cf. 1 Chr 22:12–13; Jer 22:15–16). In the singular (perhaps preferable) the word could be understood as a "spirit of judgment", a God-given ability to judge rightly, as the context of the psalms itself shows. In any case no room is left for autocracy or despotism. The king is subject to God whom he represents and whose laws he is bound to obey. Also, by the context, the bestowal of God's justice, "the virtue which intervenes actively to deliver the oppressed and to ensure the

execution of just judgment",¹ is clearly implied.

1.b The expressions *melek* and *ben-melek* (without the article by virtue of a poetic concession) may not necessarily be referring to two different persons, the king and his son, but rather to a single person. This is suggested by the context and the parallelism. In such case *ben-melek* could be simply indicating a king who is legitimate heir to the throne. According to another valid interpretation, it refers to the prince, the son of the king, who is now, in a ceremony of coronation, ascending to the throne. There is also the possibility that those expressions might be referring to the reigning or enthroned king and his royal progeny. Thus the whole dynasty, besides the individual king in question, would be the object of the wishes and aspirations expressed in the psalm.

2.a It is not necessary for us to adopt the reading of LXX (κρίνειν), as if *lādîn* instead of *yādîn*, i.e. "to judge" instead of "he will judge" or "may he judge", was read in the Hebrew text, in order to see the close connection between the first two verses. It is precisely to judge (*dîn*) the poor, in other words, to defend, to deliver the poor, the class of people which is the object of God's special attention, that the king needs "justice" and "judgment".

2.b The parallelism between "your people" and "your poor" may suggest that 'am, "people", as used here, is in contrast to the rich, dominant, and privileged classes, i.e. the members of the Israelite aristocracy. The mass of people was generally poor. Yet, at times the nation itself could be appropriately called "poor", vis-à-vis the oppression of strong foreign nations. They depended on God and were helpless without his protection.

3.a Some ancient Versions (Vg, Syr, and the Greek Lucianic MSS) omit here

the preposition *b*, "with, in, by, through", leaving "justice" and "peace" in direct parallelism. This is certainly possible as both concepts are closely related. However, taking MT as it is (supported by LXX and Tg), *bîs̄^e dāqâ*, "in" or "through justice", would indicate the means by which peace is achieved. With or without the preposition the verse clearly points to the fact that real peace is the fruit of justice, and that there can be no real peace unless justice lays the ground for it.

4.a As in v. 2, it is again stated that the king shall judge, i.e. save or deliver the poor, here referred to as *b^enê-'ebyôn*, "the sons of the needy". This expression, a Hebrew *hapax legomenon*, is generally explained in three different ways: (1) those who belong to the class of the poor; (2) the children of the poor, among which would be the orphans; (3) those who are born to poverty (just like *ben-melek* is one who is born a king), as suggested by Delitzsch.²

4.b It has been suggested that either the last part of the verse ("May he crush the oppressor") is a gloss or its parallel is missing. However, none of these suppositions is likely to be true. There is no support for them in the ancient versions; besides the tristich has a logical structure and is paralleled elsewhere (cf. Ps 146:9; Pr 22:22,23).

5.a My translation, "may he live" (or "may he last") is based on LXX, which seems to have read *w^eya'³rîk*. MT has *yîrâ'ûkâ*, "may they fear you" (or "they shall fear you"). In the first case we would have a possible poetic variation of the royal acclamation formula "Long live the king" (cf. 1 Sam 10:24; 2 Sam 16:16; 1 Kg 1:25, 31, 34, 39; 2 Kg 11:12).³ In the second case, we have the suggestive possibility of the people (apparently "the poor" and "the sons of the needy" of v.4) being compelled to fear (worship, serve) Yahweh as a result of his intervention on their behalf, through the righteous king. The sudden

transition from the third to the second person does not represent a real problem. It is poetically acceptable. In fact, the change is just a return to God, who is addressed in v. 1, for the psalmist is supposed to be praying to God throughout the whole poem (though his prayer is also the expression of a wish and a common cherished hope). A similar change of person is also attested, for instance, in Pss 23 and 91. Depending on the text which is adopted (Greek or Hebrew), v. 5 indicates either that God will be feared for ever or that the king will live forever. The latter option (expressed by LXX) is supported by passages like Ps 21:4[5]; 45:6[7]; 2 Sam 7:13, 16, 29.

5.b The phrases *'im-šāmeš*, "with the sun" (only here in the Old Testament), and *lipnê yārē^ah*, "before the moon" (cf. 89:37[38]), which can also be respectively translated, "while the sun endures", and "as long as the moon" are poetic expressions equivalent to "for ever". The related expression, *dōr dōrîm*, literally "a generation of generations", usually denotes a remote time in the future or in the past.

6.a The Hebrew word *zarzîp* (MT) is obscure. It occurs only here in the Old Testament. The reading *yazrîpû*, "that water", instead, as a verbal form, seems to be widely adopted.

7.a MT has *šaddîq*, "the just (man)", but *šedeq*, "justice", seems more appropriate because of the parallelism with *šālôm* and the evidence of LXX, Syr, Jer, three Hebrew MSS, and the Arabic.

7.b The phrase *'ad-b^elî yārē^ah*, "till the moon be no more", occurs only here in the Old Testament. By the context it must be equivalent to the similar phrases of v. 5, in which case it is just another poetic way of saying "for ever".

9.a MT has *šîyîm*, which means "desert-dwellers" (used in the Old

Testament for both men and animals). LXX, Aq, and Sym read Αἰθίοπες (Jer *Aethiopes*), "Ethiopians". Syr reads *gzrt*, which is equivalent to *'îyîm* in v. 10. The emendation generally adopted, *ṣārîm*, "adversaries", or *ṣārāyw* "his adversaries", seems more adequate and makes a perfect parallelism with "his enemies" of stich b.

12.a Parallels to v. 12 are found in Ps 35:10 and especially in Job 29:12, where the striking similarity has raised the suspicion that one phrase may be dependent on the other. But the facts that they are not totally identical, and that their concern was a familiar issue in Israel prevent us from taking such a suspicion seriously.

12.b The Hebrew word which in MT is pointed *m^ošawwe^a*, "who cries out", is read *miššô^a*, ("from the harsh master or tyrant") by LXX, Syr, Jer, Arabic and Tg). Which reading is the original one? There seems to be no way for this to be decided. Nevertheless a combination of both seems to be implicit in the meaning of v. 12a. The poor who cries out is delivered from the hands of a rich master or tyrant ruler.

12.c The phrase *w^o'ên-'ôzēr lô*, "and him who has no helper", may also be translated as a relative clause in reference to *'ânî*, "poor": "(And the poor) who has no helper". The latter seems to fit better the structure of the verse. Both stichs would end with a relative clause modifying the terms *'ebyôn* and *'ânî* in parallelism. Though the clauses may also be understood in a temporal sense, "when he cries out", "when he has no helper", a simple relative sense seems preferable. In this case the clauses would be making explicit the idea denoted by the words to which they relate: *'ebyôn* is a poor man who cries out (under oppression); *'ânî* is a poor man who has no helper (in his affliction and humiliation).

13.a The repetition of *'ebyôn*, "needy, poor", three times in two verses (12 and 13) led Gunkel to admit that v. 13 is perhaps a later addition.⁴ However, it is quite possible that here we have a deliberate stress on the object of the king's justice: the poor, the needy.

14.a There is no good reason for us to consider *ûmēhāmās*, "and from violence", as a gloss on *mittôk*, "from oppression", as some authors (Gunkel and others) do. The liberationist role of the king is given more significance as the harsh plight from which the poor is delivered is clearly described. And also, in the end there is nothing abnormal with the metre. It is interesting to observe that, corresponding to MT "from oppression and violence", LXX has ἐκ τόκου καὶ ἐξ ἀδικίας, "from usury and injustice", making evident the ideas of economic oppression and unjust violence (*hāmās*), which are obviously associated.

14.b MT has *dāmām*, "their blood", but LXX and Th read τὸ ὄνομα αὐτῶν, "their names", which is likely to be a corruption. The connection between "oppression/violence" in stich a and "blood" in stich b is perfect. In ancient Israel as in modern times the blood of the poor is always shed because of oppression (which is and includes violence).

15.a My rendering "and may there be given to him" is based on *w^oyuttan-lô* which is supported by LXX, Syr, Arabic, and Jer. MT has *w^oyitten-lô*, "and may he give to him", which does not make good sense. In fact the whole v. 15 looks troublesome. Authors are divided in the identification of subjects and objects. For instance, who gives gold to whom? Who blesses whom? It seems acceptable to take v. 15 as an echo of vv. 5 and 10, for the psalmist is given to repetitions and flashbacks. "(Long) may he live" refers then to the king. He is also the one who is prayed for, is blessed, and to whom the gold is given.

This harmonizes with the thrust of the whole psalm. Yet, it is not likely that the poor of v. 14 should be directly regarded as subject in v. 15, though of course they would be among those who bless and pray for the king. The subject is rather a generic third person plural, referring to the people, or men in general, or even the nations.⁵

16.a The meaning of *pissat* (contract) is one of the several problems generally alluded to in regard to v. 16. Nevertheless, "abundance", the meaning indicated by the Aramaic, seems quite suitable.

16.b The phrase "on the mountain tops", though sometimes placed at the end of stich a (on the false assumption that the verbs are to be taken as head of the clauses), seems to fit better as part of stich b, standing in parallelism with "in the land" and allowing a better metrical division of the verse. Abundance of grain is to be found not only on the valleys (where fertility is usually expected), but even on the tops of mountains, where the soil is thin.

17.a Because of its repetition, *š^omô*, "his name", is sometimes omitted in the second stich or replaced by "his fame" or "his seed", where it is the subject of the verbal form *yānîn* ("have increase", Kethib), or *yinnôn* ("be propagated, spread", Qere and many MSS), or *yikkôn* ("be firm, established, endure", one MS). LXX, which has *διαμνεῖ*, "stay, remain, continue" (probably reading *yikkôn*), adds "blessed" to 17a and "all peoples of the earth" to 17c, conferring a smoother reading on the verse and making clearer its connection with Gn 12:2-3; 22:18 etc., as if in David's house God's promise to Abraham had been fulfilled:

May his name be blessed forever,
 may his name continue as long as the sun;
 and may all the peoples of the earth
 bless themselves in him,

may all nations call him blessed!

Whichever translation is adopted, the idea of the continuation of the king's posterity seems to be suggested in stich b anyway. This could be implicit in the use of *šēm*, "name", and of the verbal root *nyn* or *nwn*, which has a derived noun, *nîn*, meaning "offspring". Yet, this verse, as well as the whole psalm, is ambiguous. Extraordinary longevity for the king himself could be also implied, as it is effectively understood from a messianic-eschatological perspective.

18.a Though this and the following verses are normally considered a late addition, patterned after the customary closing doxologies that are placed at the end of the collections of psalms (as in 41:14[15]; 89:52[53]; 106:48), Weiser raises the question about the possibility of these verses having been part of the original text of Ps 72. His question is based on the fact that they are followed by the annotation of the compiler of the Psalter (v. 20), which is supposed to be of an earlier date than the division of the whole Psalter in five books.⁶

20.a This verse is an editorial annotation (similar to the one in Job 31:40) affixed by a compiler who had only a segment of the Psalter before him. LXX has οἱ ὕμνοι, reading *t°hillôt*, "praises", instead of *t°pillôt* (MT), "prayers". It is quite possible that "prayers" was the earliest collective term for the psalms.⁷ It occurs in the titles of five psalms (17, 86, 90, 102, and 142) and twenty-six times elsewhere in the Psalter. However, "praises" points to another outstanding feature of the Psalter and may well serve as the title of the whole collection, though it might also be an indication of the predominant character of the use of the Psalter in later times.

5.1.3. Critical and Literary Considerations

Ps 72 was chosen for a special study because of the clear and comprehensive description it gives, although in a form of prayer, of the aspirations and hopes of the ancient Israelites in connection with the royal house of David. And such an expectation has obviously a considerable bearing on the issue of hope for the poor, both in terms of present and future.

It is generally accepted that Ps 72, in its original setting, was composed to be sung at the coronation of a new Israelite king, or perhaps at the annual celebration of his kingship which may have formed part of the New Year Festival. In its form of prayer it was apparently designed to express the wishes of the worshippers, in public celebration, for the enthroned king. It is possible that it was used on behalf of successive Davidic kings. When was it composed? Who would have been the king (the first one) referred to in this ancient poem?

The first apparent indication of authorship is found in its title, *liš[°]lōmōh*, which can be rendered as "of Solomon", "by Solomon", or "for Solomon". Thus the title itself is not quite clear, for it could be interpreted as not only indicating Solomon's authorship, but also as "pertaining to Solomon" (Davidic collection) or "in honour of Solomon".

The evidence from the ancient versions does not offer much help to solve the problem. LXX has Εἰς Σαλωμων, "concerning Solomon", obviously referring to the subject of the psalm. Syr ascribed it to David, probably in connection with 1 Kg 1-2:11. Tg reads, "By (of) Solomon spoken in prophecy: 'O God, give your regultions of right to the King Messiah'". The additions make the text refer expressly to the Messiah as the subject of the psalm, while Solomon would have been the author.

The Hebrew MSS present a new problem, for the title does not appear in five of them, and also in a few MSS Pss 71 and 72 are shown together as if they were a single poem. In fact the title which apparently suggests the Solomonic authorship may have been a late addition on the basis of the contents of the psalm, especially vv. 1-2, 10, and 15. The only other psalm to bear a similar title (not attested in the LXX) is Ps 127, probably in connection with v. 1, where the "house" may have been assumed to be the Temple.

Obviously in connection with the difficulty in determining the author's identity, a wide range of views have been suggested regarding the date and occasion of Ps 72: from the time of king David to that of Ptolemy Philadelphus II in Egypt.⁸ However, as we are dealing with a royal psalm, it must be dated in the pre-exilic period, as in fact most authors seem to do, probably during the early Davidic monarchy. Any attempt to identify the earthly king referred to in the psalm as Solomon, or Hezekiah, or even Josiah is purely conjectural. But it seems clear that the author--whoever he was--had the glorious period of Solomonic kingship in mind as his major source of imagery. Although not saying that Solomon himself composed the psalm, Dahood suggests that a functionary of his court might well have done it. Hebrew-Ugaritic comparative study led him to conclude that the language in some verses is very archaic. He also alluded to the fact that vv. 1, 8, 10, 15 can all be applied to Solomon.⁹

The name of God occurs only once in the psalm under the form *"lôhîm*, which is supposedly enough for the psalm to be stamped as Elohistic. The origin and early itinerary of the psalm is thus suggested by Hanks:

. . . certain "liberation theologians" may have been members of David's and Solomon's courts, at least in the early years, and may have maintained and developed the Exodus tradition. When decadence and apostasy infected Solomon's later reign, this psalm could have been carried to

northern prophetic circles. There, Elohist redactors would have incorporated it into their "Elohist Psalter" (Pss 42-72). When Samaria fell (722-721 B.C.) or perhaps before, the psalm may have returned south with the Deuteronomistic literature and been incorporated into the Davidic collection (72:20).¹⁰

The fact is that in this terrain we are only dealing with good guesses and possibilities. Another area where some difficulty is found is the rendering of the tense and mood of the verbal forms of Ps 72. No uniformity exists in this respect among modern versions of the Bible and biblical commentaries. One would expect that those who would prefer to stress the character of the psalm as a prayer would tend to make predominant use of the jussive (expressing a wish,) whereas those who would like to stress its prophetic character would give preference to the imperfect rendered in the future of the indicative. However, what we actually find among most translations is a mixture of forms, apparently without any logical arrangement. The difficulty is that very often the Hebrew jussive and imperfect have identical forms--a case of ambiguity which has in Ps 72 a good source of examples. Without doubt this ambiguity encouraged a prophetic reading of Ps 72, a royal psalm which probably was not originally intended to be read as prophecy, although it must have its roots on early prophetic oracles.

Murphy, though interpreting the psalm as messianic, points to the fact that the verbal forms *w^ayērd* (v. 8), *yāhōs* (v. 13), and *y^ahî* (vv. 15, 16, 17) are definitely jussives, and he takes the jussives of v. 5 (emended), 8 and 15, introduced by the conjunction *w*, "and", as the beginning of new strophes, in an attempt to match the strophic structure of the poem with the rendering of jussives and imperfects.¹¹ But in the end this would look an artificial arrangement, with very little chance of resembling the original form of the poem. The "clearly indicative forms" would be the verbs in vv. 12-14 (with one

exception), and also *yādîn* (v. 2) and *yôšî'* (vv. 4 and 13), though in these three cases the jussive would be possible though revocalization.

That the poem is a prayer is clearly seen by the use of the imperative *tēn* in v. 1. The "indisputable" jussive forms in vv. 8, 13, 15, 16, and 17 help to confirm it. But such a prayer is also liable to be read as prophecy, as shown by Mowinckel in his explanation of the problem regarding the rendering of jussives and imperfects. He says:

In Israelite opinion the intercessory prayer had the same creating might as the blessing and oracle. It too was an efficacious word with something of the creative might of the other. There is no great difference between the conceptions: "may this and that blessing happen to you", or "may Yahweh give you this or that", and "this or that will happen to you"; all these conceptions are expressed by the same forms of the verb. So there may be cases where it is difficult to decide whether we have a word of blessing, an intercessory prayer, or a prophecy, and therefore we are uncertain how to translate. A psalm like 72 may easily be read as a prophecy of the ideal king, and this has been the traditional explanation. . . .¹²

Given this fluidity of the Hebrew verb forms and the related matter of ambivalence regarding the nature of a word of blessing, an intercessory prayer, and a prophecy, it is valid to admit that a double reading of Ps 72 was possible probably as early as the time of its composition. Besides, as we have suggested, the poem must have been based on traditional hopes rooted in prophetic oracles. For all that it was not without reason that the psalm itself came to be read as a prophecy concerning the Ideal King or Messiah.

Leaving aside v. 20, which is an editorial annotation added by a compiler, the poem comprises some fifteen distichs and four tristichs representing quite a variety of metrical arrangements, although with a slight predominance of distichs *3+3* and *3+2*. Our scansion (forcibly uncertain in some verses) shows

the following results: $\mathfrak{S}+\mathfrak{S}$: vv. 6, 7, 9, 13; $\mathfrak{S}+\mathfrak{Z}$: vv. 2, 8, 12; $\mathfrak{A}+\mathfrak{Z}$: vv. 1, 3; $\mathfrak{Z}+\mathfrak{Z}$: vv. 5, 11; $\mathfrak{A}+\mathfrak{A}$: vv. 10, 19; $\mathfrak{A}+\mathfrak{S}$: vv. 14, 18; $\mathfrak{Z}+\mathfrak{Z}+\mathfrak{Z}$: v. 4; $\mathfrak{S}+\mathfrak{S}+\mathfrak{S}$: v. 17; $\mathfrak{A}+\mathfrak{S}+\mathfrak{Z}$: v. 15; $\mathfrak{A}+\mathfrak{S}+\mathfrak{A}$: v. 16.

Chiasmus is a poetic device which the author of the psalm does not spare. Employing it several times (vv. 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17) he adds beauty to his poem as well as emphasis to some words and expressions, as they are placed in crossed positions in the distichs. The chiasmus of v. 11 is undoubtedly the most obvious of all, where we have a perfect $A+B/B'+A'$ structure:

And-may-bow-down-before-him all-kings,
all-nations may-serve-him!

The poem does not present a clear strophic division and besides its internal thematic structure is fairly inconsistent. Verses belonging to the same theme are found scattered in the poem. For instance, v. 4 is thematically related to vv. 12-14; v. 5 is related to vv. 15-17, with exception of v. 16, which is thematically connected with vv. 3, 6-7. As it is the poem can be roughly dismembered in the following divisions:

A Prayer for the Just King

- a) Praying for Justice and Prosperity (vv. 1-7)
- b) Praying for World Dominion (vv. 8-11)
- c) The King as Deliverer of the Poor (vv. 12-14)
- d) Praying for Longevity and Blessedness (vv. 15-17)
- e) Closing Doxology (vv. 18-20)

However, in the study that shall now follow, this psalm will be considered according to its basic themes, involving, as already suggested, a shift in the position of several verses:

A Kingdom Devised for the Poor

A) A Kingdom of Justice and Prosperity

- a) Justice as Deliverance of the Poor (vv. 1-2, 4, 12-14)
- b) Peace and Prosperity for All (vv. 3, 6-7, 16)

B) A Kingdom Universal and Everlasting

- a) Worldwide Dominion (vv. 8-11)
- b) An Enduring Order of Blessedness (vv. 5, 15, 17-19)

5.2. THE PRACTICE OF JUSTICE AS DELIVERANCE OF THE POOR

The basic themes of Ps 72 shall now be studied in a broader perspective, i.e. within the context of the Psalter. Its bearing on the issues such as the nature, objects, and fruits of justice from the perspective of the kingdom to come shall be explored under different topics within the following two sections.

The theme of justice is central in Ps 72 and a clear understanding of the biblical concept of justice is crucial for any relevant explanation of its contents. This will certainly become clear as we proceed in our study. As for the present subsection, the pertinent verses are 1-2, 4, 12-14, which we quote:

1. O God, grant your judgment (*mišpāt*) to the king,
and your justice (*š^odāqā*) to the son of the king!
2. May he judge (*dîn*) your people with justice (*šedeq*),
and your poor with judgment (*mišpāt*)!
4. May he judge (*šāpat*) the poor of the people,
deliver (*yāša'*) the sons of the needy,
and crush (*dākā*) the oppressor!
12. For he shall deliver (*nāšal*) the needy who cries out,
the poor and him who has no helper.
13. He shall have compassion (*hôs*) on the weak and the
needy,
and save (*yāša'*) the lives of the needy.
14. From oppression and violence he shall redeem (*gā'al*)
their lives,
and their blood shall be precious in his sight.

5.2.1. The Semantic-theological Perspective of Justice

The terms which are predominantly used in Ps 72 and elsewhere in the Old Testament to convey the idea of "justice" are *šedeq* (vv. 2, 7) and *š^odāqā*

(vv. 1, 3), sometimes also translated as "righteousness". The prayer of Ps 72 is opened with a plea to God to grant his $\text{š}^{\circ}\text{dāqā}$ (v. 1) to the king so that he may judge his people with šedeq (v. 2). These terms are not only perfect synonyms. They in fact represent the variation in gender of one and the same vocable (the former is feminine and the latter masculine). They are abundantly found in the Old Testament, where together they occur some 268 times, eighty-three in the psalms alone. Along with the adjective šaddîq , "just, righteous" (206 times, fifty-two in the Psalter), they come from a root (šdq) of uncertain etymology, sometimes explained in the light of the Arabic as probably meaning "straightness". From the same root we have the denominative verb, šādaq , "to be just" (forty-three times in the Psalter), which in the Hiphil means "to justify; make righteous" or "to do justice" (2 Sam 15:4; Ps 82:3).

There has already been sufficient evidence in our study to support the view that the Old Testament concept of justice is quite diverse from that of our Western world, which presupposes an ideal ethical norm by which a person's behaviour is measured. H. Cremer was probably the first one to recognize this and to offer a new understanding of the biblical concept of justice, which has been widely accepted in its basic thesis. Considering the sense of the basic term for "justice" in the Old Testament, he says that

Every relationship brings with it certain claims upon conduct, and the satisfaction of these claims, which issue from the relationship and in which alone the relationship can persist, is described by our term š-d-q .¹³

For him the use of this word points to a "real relationship between two parties, and not the relationship of an object under consideration to an idea".¹⁴

Eichrodt takes Cremer's view into consideration and comes up with the

conclusion that the original biblical concept of God's righteousness (which I prefer to call justice) in its essence "exalts over all abstract ethical ideas a *loyalty manifested in the concrete relationships of community*".¹⁵ His accounts, however, according to von Rad, are still too much determined by our forensic conception of righteousness.¹⁶

The relationships referred to are the multiple associations made possible among men on different levels and in different categories, involving the family, political unity, economic life, religion, etc., and the relationship between man (or the people) and God. The concept of the righteous (or just one) in the light of what has been said of justice, is so explained by Achtemeier: "When God or man fulfils the conditions imposed upon him by a relationship, he is, in OT terms, righteous".¹⁷ He is the person who follows the rules in community life and therefore to whom no blame or guilt can be ascribed.

Discussing the meaning of the Hebrew nouns *šēdeq* and *š°dāqâ* and the ways in which they have been interpreted, Tomas Hanks stresses Miranda's contribution to our understanding of the biblical concept of justice, which uses the class struggle and oppression of the poor as a point of departure.¹⁸ He says that

With Miranda's study we enter another stage in the understanding of justice in Biblical Theology. . . . Justice, therefore, is to be understood not as impartiality or neutrality, but rather as deliberate choice and praxis in favour of the poor oppressed.¹⁹

Though it could be argued that Miranda sometimes seems to overdo his case, however, his basic arguments, based on sound exegesis, have indeed brought an invaluable contribution to our understanding of "justice" in the Bible and in the Old Testament in particular, which we cannot afford to overlook.

According to Ps 72:2, the king is to judge the poor with *mišpāt*, another important Hebrew term for "justice", which we have translated as "judgment" (sometimes it means "ordinance"), having reserved the rendering "justice" for *šedeq* and *š^odāqā*. It occurs in parallelism with the former in v. 2 and possibly also with the latter in v. 1 (see Textual Note 1.a, p. 249). Its use is widely attested in the Old Testament, where it occurs some 419 times (sixty-five in the psalms). It is derived from *šāpat*, "to judge, rule" (about 202 times in the Old Testament, thirty-one in the psalms), which appears in v. 4, describing the role of the king as deliverer of the poor: "May he *judge* the poor of the people". When expressing a judicial function, *šāpat* denotes either "to defend, deliver", or "to avenge, punish". It stands in parallelism with *yāša'*, "to save", in 4b, which must also be understood in the sense of "to deliver, help, rescue".

For Hertzberg "*mišpāt* consists in doing justice to the poor, neither more or less".²⁰ Considering the use of the root *špt*, especially in reference to the use of the noun *šōp^otîm*, commonly translated as "Judges" and applied to the chiefs who liberated Israel from the oppression of their neighbours, Miranda argues that the original meaning of *šāpat* is not "to judge", but "to save from oppression". He goes on to say that

mišpāt is the defense of the weak, the liberation of the oppressed, doing justice to the poor. The fact that laws were originally called *mišpātîm* (. . .) is a datum of incalculable importance, for it indicates the intention and original meaning of the legislation.²¹

He recognizes that in some cases the terms customarily translated by "judge", "to judge", and "judgment" refer to the judicial institution, but he also agrees with Hertrich when the latter affirms that

Even in texts like Gen. 16:5, in which by the preposition *bēn* (that is, "between") the root *špt* undoubtedly has a juridical meaning, one can see that it is not the verdict as such which is important, but rather the elimination of an injury in which the violation of justice consisted.²²

It is significant that the roots *špt* and *šdq* occur ninety-seven times linked to each other in close association throughout the Old Testament. They are seen paired together thirty-two times; *mišpāt* is employed twenty-three times in strict synonymous parallelism with *š^adāqā* and eleven times with *šedeq*; in thirty-one instances we find the phrase *š^adāqā ūmišpāt*, "justice and right (or judgment)", sometimes also in inverted order, which is clearly a hendiadys with the technical meaning of justice for the poor and oppressed.²³

As seen in v. 4, "May he *judge* (your people with justice)", the liberating action of the king is also expressed by the use of the verb *dîn*, "to judge, do justice" (twenty-three times, seven in the Psalms), which is sometimes associated with the forms of the roots *šdq* and *špt*. It is a synonym of *šāpāt*, but occurs mostly in poetic literature. Many times it denotes acts of deliverance, especially of the poor and oppressed. The noun *dîn*, "justice, judgment" (nineteen times in the Old Testament, three in the Psalms),²⁴ is synonymous to *mišpāt* and likewise its usage is very often linked with the idea of liberation of the poor and oppressed, as in Ps 140:12[13]:

I know that Yahweh will do justice (*dyn*) to the poor,
judgment (*mišpāt*) to the needy.

The context of the psalm shows that the justice they need involves their deliverance from the wicked, the evil men, the men of violence.

From the same root we have the noun *dayyān*, "judge", which occurs only

twice (1 Sam 24:15; Ps 68:5[6]) in the Hebrew of the Old Testament (just once in Aramaic, in Ezra 7:25). In both cases it is applied to God, who is described in 68:5[6] as "a father of orphans and a judge (*dayyān*) of widows".²⁵

Verses 12–14 make plain what the king's practice of justice and his judgment of the poor is all about. He is not portrayed as a neutral and legalistic character, whose justice only consists in declaring who is right and who is wrong according to the law, nor as a simple philanthropist who holds a superficial programme of social assistance to the poor. Rather, as the verbs of these three verses show, he has compassion (*ḥôś*) on the poor, he delivers (*nāṣal*) them, he saves or rescues (*yāšā'*) them, he redeems (*gā'al*) their lives from oppression and violence, and conversely he crushes (*dāka'*) or "oppresses" the oppressor of the poor. In short, the king takes positive and effective action to ensure the complete deliverance of the poor. He touches the very causes of poverty, he uproots and rebuilds society on the principle of justice.

The king's pity on the poor and weak (v. 13) is not just a commendable or noble feeling, something superficial which does not involve real commitment. It is rather real compassion, which is expressed in action as described by the parallel verb *yāšā'* as well as *nāṣal* (see p. 64) and *gā'al* (see p. 65). The use of *gā'al* applied to the king suggests that he is sided with the poor by affinity, as a kinsman. Like God he is the redeemer (*gō'ēl*) of the poor, with the responsibility to deliver them from oppression and see to their wellbeing. But the rescue of a kinsman can be sometimes a costly and risky business, implying warfare or bloody conflict, as when Abraham took 318 men from his household and went after the kings who had taken Lot and his family captive (Gn 14:11–16). Such an enterprise is also an act of deliverance (*nsl*), the idea

of which is best exemplified in the rescuing of a prey from the mouth of a wild beast. Unless first "neutralized" by some display of might, a lion will not let its prey go free. As in the experience of the Exodus, the liberation of the poor cannot be accomplished without a successful confrontation with the oppressors, who typify the powers of chaos. In early historical times as in the trials of the future the role of Yahweh as liberator and redeemer of his people always involves a mighty conflict with their enemies, as vividly depicted in Is 49:25b-26:

I will contend with those who contend with you,
and I will save your children.
I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh;
and they shall be drunk with their own blood
as with wine.
Then all mankind will know
that I am Yahweh, your Saviour,
and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

It is then no wonder that we read in v. 4c that the king "shall crush (or "oppress") the oppressor", no matter how disturbing this may appear to us. Such an act of "violence" is not only justified in the light of the Covenant concept of retribution, it is also required for objective reasons, for without it no radical change on behalf of the poor can be achieved. Whenever God is said to watch over, help, save, deliver, etc., the poor, an action against their oppressors is either assumed or clearly expressed, as in the following passages, which can be paralleled to v. 4:

Yahweh watches over the alien,
he upholds the orphan and the widow,
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.
(Ps 146:9)

Do not exploit the poor because they are poor,
and do not crush the needy in court,
For Yahweh will take up their cause
and will plunder those who plunder them.
(Pr 22:22-23)

The need for energetic action against "those who plunder" the poor is also recognized outside Israel. In a text from Ugarit (the Legend of King Keret), which we have already quoted on p. 130, prince *Yassib* accuses his father of not "driving out" those who prey upon the poor. The king of Ps 72 is not said to be "violent", although he crushes the oppressor. The oppression of the weak and poor (v. 14) is what the Old Testament really calls "violence" (*ḥāmās*). The "violence" involved in the act of liberation of the poor is in fact not violence, but an act of judgment, an expression of justice. Thus liberation as an act of judgment always implies an act of rescue and another of punishment or vengeance. Therefore the three stichs of v. 4 form a perfect logical unit. The second and third ones make explicit the meaning of the first one (based on *šāpat*), forming an interesting antitheses: the king *judges* the poor of the people by *delivering* the poor and *crushing* the oppressor. Whereas the oppressor practices violence (*ḥāmās*), endangering the very lives of the poor, as *dāmām*, "their blood", in 14b indicates, the liberator king practices justice (*mišpāt*), no matter how much power he will be required to display in the process. No diplomatic negotiations, no round the table conversations, no compromising with the oppressors is here envisaged. The change of the lot of the poor is costly and has to be radical. This may not appear palatable for most of us with a tamed Christian consciousness adapted to our modern times, but such is the picture we have in Ps 72. The cause of the poor in ancient Israel (as it is now in the so-called Third World countries) was a matter of ultimate concern, as far as politics and morality is concerned.

The sorry social conditions described by the Prophet Amos in the north, and Isaiah and Micah in the south is a further stage of a process that had its origin in the early monarchy, as pointed out by Murphy:

The adoption of monarchical government witnessed the beginning of definite strata in Israelite society. The social differences were further increased by the unhealthy prosperity introduced during Solomon's reign. A proletariat arose and their fortune was conditioned by several factors: high taxes, uncertain yield of crops, usury in loans, wars, etc. In contrast to these a rich aristocracy lived well; they were less influenced than formerly by tribal and national unity and grew up a class apart, often exploiting the less fortunate.²⁶

Read over against this background Ps 72 represents a cherished hope for the poor not only as a "utopia", an ideal and refined sociopolitical project for the remote future, but also as an indirect voice of protest against those who oppress them in the present, and a call to change, by way of example.

5.2.2. Remarks on the Nature of God's Justice in the Psalms

Is the nature of justice as practised by the Ideal (messianic) King in Ps 72 a real expression of God's justice as depicted elsewhere in the Psalter? A brief look at this issue, though sometimes already touched in passing, shall now be undertaken to enhance a little our previous discussion.

According to Ps 72:1-2, the Ideal King receives his justice, or the Spirit of justice, or the enablement to practice God's justice (or even the norms of justice), from God himself. Therefore, the nature, character, and purpose of this bestowed justice should by no means be different from that which is exercised by God himself, who is acknowledged by his people as "King from of old" (74:12), "King for ever and ever" (10:16) over all the nations (22:28[29]). And the nature and character of God's justice is given expression by the single or combined use of the three roots referred to above, as abundantly attested in the psalms. What is applied to God in this respect is tantamount to what is applied to his representative, his Anointed One.

In Ps 9 it is declared that "Yahweh is known by his justice (*mišpāt*)" (v.

16[17]). And the justice which makes up God's reputation is revealed in his acts of deliverance of the oppressed, the needy and the afflicted (vv. 9[10], 12[13], 18[19]). He is Creator and King, therefore unlimited in his power to intervene and demand justice on earth. The act of creation was only the beginning. Justice is necessary to preserve life and order against the permanent threat of chaos in the realms of Creation and human society. Such a threat is made possible by injustice, which is rooted in human sin. Thus, in Ps 146, after the statement that God is the Creator (v. 6), and before the acclamation, "Yahweh will reign for ever" (v. 10), a brief list of his acts of justice is given, which reveals his concern as Creator as well as King (vv. 7-9):

He does justice to the oppressed,
 he gives bread to the hungry.
 Yahweh sets prisoners free,
 Yahweh opens the eyes of the blind.
 Yahweh raises those who are bowed down,
 Yahweh loves the righteous.
 Yahweh watches over the alien,
 he upholds the orphan and the widow,
 but he frustrates the way of the wicked.

In Ps 113 Yahweh is to be praised not only because he is high above all nations and his glory above the heavens, but also, and very especially, because of his earthly interventions on behalf of the poor, i.e. his deeds of justice or salvation (like those described in Ps 146) to which his own glory is due (vv. 5-9):

Who is like Yahweh our God,
 who is seated on high,
 who stoops down to look
 on the heavens and the earth?
 He raises the poor from the dust,
 and lifts the needy from the dunghill.
 He makes them sit with princes,
 with the princes of his people.
 He settles the barren woman in her home,
 as a happy mother of children.

This passage is one of those which deal with the incomparability of Yahweh, a theme which was the object of a special study by C. J. Labuschagne.²⁷ It is remarkable how many of the biblical passages headed by the rhetoric question, "Who is like Yahweh?" end with a statement, as in Ps 113, about his condescension and commitment to help the poor, the weak, and the wronged. Though working from a different perspective, Labuschagne's findings are strikingly similar to ours. He says:

The dominating characteristic causing Yahweh to be incomparable is His miraculous intervention in history as the redeeming God. This obviously includes a whole range of concatenated qualities: He is a warrior, great, mighty, holy and terrible; *a God of Justice, who rescues the oppressed, the wronged, and the weak*; a God who works wonders. The incomparability of the redeeming God is always ambivalent in that it evinces both salvation and destruction: redemption for His elect and for the faithful, destruction for his enemies and for the wicked.²⁸

Still relevant for our considerations is what he adds further on:

Closely connected with His aspect as a great, holy warrior, is His work as *upholder of justice*. This is undoubtedly the predominant, most outstanding attribute of Yahweh associated with the idea of His incomparability as revealed through His activity as Redeemer. It was particularly as the *God of justice* that He intervened in Israel's history. . .²⁹

In Ps 89, a royal psalm, Yahweh is praised as Creator (vv. 9-13[10-14]) and King, whose throne (v. 14[15]) has justice (*ṣedeq*) and judgment (*mišpāt*) for foundation (cf. 97:2). By the way this verse ends another passage beginning with "Who is like?" (v. 6[7]). Still in this psalm, concerning the Davidic king, his Anointed One, God makes a solemn promise (vv. 22-23[23-24]):

No enemy will subject him to tribute,
the wicked will not oppress him.
I will crush his foes before him,
and his adversaries I will strike down.

In so doing, Yahweh reveals his justice by declaring himself against those who oppose themselves to his representative who embodies the ideal of justice, in whose realm the forces of chaos must be overcome.

But Yahweh is not only a God who practices justice. Ps 82 depicts him as a supreme God and incomparable demander of justice. Standing in the great assembly of "gods" (an image paralleled in ancient Near Eastern mythology and the prophets), Yahweh judges (*yīšpōt*) them for their ultimate sin, to deny justice to the poor (vv.2-4):

How long will you defend (*špt*) the unjust
and show partiality to the wicked?
Judge (*špt*) the weak and orphan,
Do justice (*sdq*) to the afflicted and oppressed.
Deliver the poor and the needy,
Set them free from the hand of the wicked.

A clear distinction is obviously made here between Yahweh and the gods, on account of his strict character of justice, the high standard of his social ethics. However, as the Old Testament usually tries to get rid of or at least to reinterpret mythological elements, it seems plausible to take the term *ʾēlōhîm* of v. 1 as ultimately pointing to human judges or rulers, for whose unjust actions the divine beings are held responsible. Commenting on vv. 3-4 Weiser stresses once more the Old Testament concept of justice. He says:

They [the verses] make clear beyond doubt what the Old Testament means when it speaks of righteousness. It does not think in this connection of something formal and legal: righteousness consists in 'doing justice' to the misery of the poor, the afflicted and the forlorn by helping them effectively. Though elsewhere he who wields power may determine what is right, the thought that the strong has to play an active part in the support of the weak pervades the whole morality of the Old Testament covenant.³⁰

It has to be stressed here, in addition, that these verses do not speak of

justice in terms of a mild action of help or support of the poor. They speak of real deliverance, of setting them free from their oppressors, which obviously implies effective confrontation with the powers of injustice.

As for the ideal king of the future, the expected Anointed One of Yahweh, his throne shall be enduring. The scepter of his kingdom will be a scepter of justice (45:6[7]). Like Yahweh, he also loves justice and hates wickedness (v. 7[8]). The singer's words, "In your majesty ride forth victoriously in behalf of truth, humility and justice" (v. 4[5]), befit him well. As he is supposed to be endowed with God's justice (72:1), it is no wonder that the liberation of the poor and weak becomes thus his chief concern.

Before closing this section, we should recall the fact that *hesed*, "(covenantal) loyalty" (sometimes also rendered "love", or "mercy") is occasionally associated in the same psalm with *sedeq* or *s°dāqâ*, and is also found in synonymic parallelism with one of them, as for instance in 36:11[12] and 143:11b-12a:

Prolong your loyalty (*hesed*) to those who know you,
and your justice (*s°dāqâ*) to the upright of heart.

In your justice (*s°dāqâ*) bring me out of trouble,
in your loyalty (*hesed*) destroy my enemies.

It can be observed in this context that *hesed*, instead of expressing a kind of neutral love or mercy, denotes rather an active solidarity with the oppressed.³¹ From another perspective we see that God's justice, which is revealed in the deliverance of the poor and the overthrow of the oppressor, is based on his covenant loyalty (*hesed*).

At this point we can conclude by affirming that what Ps 72 says about justice as practised by the Ideal King is in perfect harmony with what is

spoken of God's justice in the Psalter (and in the Old Testament). As the viceroy of Yahweh the king and his reign function as the concrete embodiment of the high ideals of justice and social order associated with the person of the unseen and Almighty God.

5.2.3. The Advent of Justice as Good News and Bad News

As we look at Ps 72:1-2, 4, 12-14, the verses that we have quoted at the beginning of the present section, we are told who are the direct beneficiaries of the King's acts of justice and who are directly affected by them in punitive terms. For some they are good news, for others, bad news. We shall now discuss this subject in the light of Ps 72 and within the wider context of the Psalter.

Ps 72 depicts the Ideal King as basically concerned with the poor, here referred by the terms *'ānî* (vv. 2, 4, 12), *'ebyôn* (vv. 4, 12, 13, 13), and *dal* (v. 13). They are always mentioned throughout the Old Testament as beneficiaries of God's justice.

Ps 72 says that the *'aniyyim* shall be judged (*dyn*) with justice (*mišpāt*), which is to say, they will be "judged", in the words of v. 4a, using *šāpāt*. The meaning of these expressions is made explicit in v. 12. They will be delivered by the Ideal King.

'ānî is the term for "poor" most frequently used in the Old Testament (eighty times) and in the Psalms (32 times). It derives from the verb *'ānāh* III,³² "to be bowed down, afflicted" (see p. 47). In the Piel it can be properly translated as "to humiliate, oppress, humble". As A. George points out,

'ānî is 'a man found in a state of diminished capacity, vigour, value' (H. Birkeland, *Ani und Anaw in den Psalmen*, Oslo, 1933), under the stroke of a present or permanent

misery, economic poverty and also sickness, imprisonment, oppression.³³

He is the poor in a present or permanent situation of oppression and humiliation, which can also explain the cause of his poverty.

He is depicted in the psalms as the victim of the wicked or evil man, by whom he is pursued or hunted down to be killed (10:2; 109:16). He is ambushed, caught and dragged off in the wicked's net (10:9). The sword of the wicked is drawn and their bow is bent to bring him down (37:14). They (the poor) are robbed or spoiled by those who are too strong for them (35:10). Their plans are frustrated by the evildoers (14:6). It is the responsibility of the rulers and magistrates to do justice to them by delivering them from the hands of the wicked oppressors (82:3). They are oppressed and forced to "retreat in disgrace" (NIV, 74:21) from the courts of justice.

In this situation they have no alternative other than crying to God for help (9:12[13]; 22:24[25]) and waiting on him (9:18[19]), their refuge (14:6). God is entreated not to forget the lives of the poor (74:19; 10:12). The psalmist of Ps 9 believes that the hope of the poor shall not perish for ever (v. 18), because Yahweh, the *gô'ēl*, the avenger of blood, the kinsman and redeemer of the poor, will consider their affliction and hear their cry (22: 24[25]; 9:12[13]). Justice will be secured for them (140:12 [13]; 72:2, 4, 12). It is because of the oppression of the poor that God shall arise (10:12) and come, in order to save them, and deliver them from those who malign them (12:5[6]; 18:27[28]), from the mighty ones who rob them. From his bounty God will provide for the poor (68:10[11]). The whole picture shows how special the *'ānî* is in God's sight.

Another category of poor mentioned in Ps 72, on behalf of whom the King's justice is especially designed, is the *'ebyôn*, usually rendered "needy". In

v. 4 the King is said to save or deliver the sons of the needy; in v. 12 he delivers the needy who cries out; in v. 13 he has pity on the needy and saves their lives.

The term *'ebyôn* apparently comes from *'ābāh*, "to be willing, consent", which may have a original meaning of "to lack, be in need". It occurs sixty-one times in the Old Testament, twenty-four in the Psalms. According to P. Humbert, originally it designates the poor "considered above all under the aspect of beggar, mendicant. The word expresses not only a shortage, but also an expectation and a request".³⁴ It occurs fifteen times (eight in the Psalms) in the stereotyped formula *'ānî w' 'ebyôn*, "poor and needy", and twelve times (five in the Psalms) in parallelism with *'ānî*

This means that most of what has been said in reference to *'ānî* is also valid for the term *'ebyôn*. The general picture is similar. The cry of the needy is heard by Yahweh (69:33[34]), who arises because of their groaning and save them from their oppressors (12:5[6]). Their oppressors and spoilers are stronger than them, but God is their Judge. He upholds their cause and delivers them (35:10; 82:4; 140:12[13]). They are pursued by the evil man (109:16), and cast down by the wicked's sword and bow (37:14). They are oppressed and found in disgrace (74:21). As Botterweck points out,

The destitution of the *'ebyôn* is to be inferred from the whole tenor of the appropriate psalms: it manifests itself in affliction, illness, loneliness, and nearness to death . . .³⁵

But there is the hope that the needy will not be forgotten for ever (9:18[19]). Yahweh shall lift them out of their affliction (107:41), out of the dunghill and sit them among princes (113:7). Yahweh shall satisfy them with food (113:7), for they are known to have no property and to lack the basic elements of

subsistence. As their redeemer, Yahweh shall stand at their right hand and save their endangered lives (109:31; 72:13).

It should be stressed here that the Ideal King is supposed to bring deliverance to the poor and their children not as an accidental act of benevolence or as a commendable appendix to his royal duties. This is his chief task, required by the very nature of God's justice with which he is endowed.

In 72:13 we have a reference to another type of poor, *dal*, "weak", who is also the object of the King's compassion. The term *dal* comes from the root *dll*, "to be thin, weak, pitiful, miserable", also attested in Akkadian and Arabic. Following 'ānî and 'ebyôn, this word is the third most frequent in the Old Testament (forty-eight times) in reference to the poor. It is mostly found in poetic texts (thirty-nine times, five in the Psalms). Its abundant usage in Proverbs (fifteen times) may suggest that it became a popular term during the monarchical period, when the differentiation of social classes was much in evidence in Israel. Although it is frequently found in parallelism with 'ebyôn (fifteen times) and with 'ānî (seven times), the condition it implies, however, seems less desperate than that evoked by its correlate terms. The *dal* could own a small property, which was probably reduced because of sickness, war, drought, and especially because of exploitation and oppression by the rich.³⁶

Along with the 'ānî the *dal* suffers oppression and violence (72:14) in the hand of the wicked (82:4). The Ideal King will have compassion on the *dallîm* and save them, but their fate also matters in the present, for the "gods" or the official ruling class which they represent are charged with denying justice to them and urged to defend the weak and the fatherless, to deliver or rescue the weak and the needy from the hand of their oppressors (82:1-4). Admitting

the possibility of Ps 82 being interpreted against the background of the time of Amos and Isaiah, Fabry concludes that

. . . this makes it likely that Ps. 82 also was directed against the official ruling class of that time, which was predominantly permeated by Canaanite ideals . . .³⁷

Such negligent and venal aristocrats, as warned in the psalm, are to be stripped of their power, for not complying with their essential duty. It is the ruler's attitude toward the poor that ratifies or undermines his position in power. Pv 29:14 states:

If a king judges the weak with equity,
his throne will be established for ever.

It is no wonder that the king of Ps 72 is granted a lasting and universal rule, since he provides liberation for the weak and the needy. As a matter of fact, everybody is supposed to be judged by God on account of their attitude toward the poor (cf. Mt 25:31-46). The psalmists express the firm conviction that Yahweh will bless him who has regard for the weak. He shall deliver them in times of trouble, shall protect him from their enemies, shall sustain him and restore him from illnesses, etc. (41:1-4[2-5]).

There are other Hebrew words denoting other types of people who belonged to the class of the poor in ancient Israel. Naturally they too are object of the king's concern, although they are not expressly mentioned in Ps 72. Among those to whom the "gods" or rulers are commanded to do justice in Ps 82:3, we have the *rāš*, "poor". This term is the participle of the verb *rûš*, "to be poor, be in want", and appears twenty-one times in the Old Testament.

The usual situation of the poor is one of oppression, and the person found in this condition is sometimes referred to as *dak*, "oppressed", and as such he

is object of God's justice. The term comes from an inferred verbal root *dkk* which, along with other related roots, namely *dkh* and *dk'*, belongs to the semantic field "to crush, pulverize; to oppress, abuse" in Hebrew. *dak* occurs only four times in the Old Testament, but other forms from the other roots are more common. In Ps 74 the psalmist is probably complaining about the distress and oppression inflicted by the enemies of Judah during the fall of the nation and following exile. He asks God to intervene: "Do not let the *oppressed* retreat in disgrace" (v. 21). It is a firm hope that when the time comes for God to arise to judge the nations he shall be a refuge, a stronghold for the oppressed (9:9[10]), and will judge/deliver him, as well as the *'ānî* and the fatherless (10:18).

Another term that serves to designate those for whom the advent of justice is good news is *ḥēl'kâ*, which occurs only in Ps 10:8, 10, 14 in parallelism with *'ānî*, "poor", *nāqî*, "innocent", and *yātôm*, "fatherless". Victim of the violence and oppression of the wicked, he commits himself to God, who sees his trouble and grief and considers it that he may take it into his hands.

The origin and meaning of the term is still uncertain. If it is derived from *hlk* (BDB), its meaning would be "poor, hapless, unfortunate". Fuhs prefers to take it as a possible corruption of *dk'/h*, meaning "bruised" or "crushed", and "contrite" in v. 10. He also admits the concreteness of these oppressed people's situation when he affirms:

These 'broken', 'miserable', 'helpless', 'small', 'weak', and 'poor' people certainly do not compose separate groups, much less factions in Israel, but as Mowinckel has argued, they are 'real suffering people', the victims of their 'enemies'.³⁸

In Ps 76, which has some parallels to Ps 72, it is said that God will rise up to save all the *'anāwîm* (pl. of *'anāw*, "poor, afflicted, humble") of the earth (v. 9). This term, from the same root as *'anî*, "poor, afflicted", is used thirteen times in the Psalms (twenty-five in the Old Testament), where it is mostly found. Though it is sometimes interpreted with a religious connotation, the closer we see its usage in the Psalms, the clearer we notice its sociological character, especially in 10:12 (Qere), 9:13[14] (Qere) and 9:19[20] (Kethib), where the Massoretes oscillated between the readings *'anāw* and *'anî*.

As *'anāwîm* is a word used to designate the poor, those who are so called, as we would expect, are depicted as oppressed by the wicked, by reason of which they cry out. Yahweh listens to their cry, encourages them, lifts them up, and cast the wicked to the ground (10:17; 147:6). In a clear expression of future hope the psalmist affirms that "The poor (*'anāwîm*) will inherit the land and enjoy abundance of peace (*šālôm*)" (37:11). They "shall eat and be satisfied" (22:27). Both references recall the tone of Ps 72, which describes the just and peaceful reign of the awaited Anointed One of Yahweh.

There are three other types of people who belong to the class of the poor and helpless who are very often mentioned in the Psalms: the *yātôm*, "orphan, fatherless", the *'almānâ*, "widow", and the *gēr*, "alien, stranger". They are usually mentioned together, as in Ps 146:9, which says that "Yahweh watches over the alien, and will lift up the fatherless and the widow", who as usual suffer in the hands of the wicked. In 94:4 these oppressors are called *pō'elê 'āwen*, "evildoers" (see p. 391), whose evil deeds in this passage consist in slaying the widow and the alien, and murdering the fatherless. God's special concern for them is expressed in 68:5[6] in an appellative form: He is Father of the fatherless and Judge of widows. The *yātôm* is also mentioned in 82:3, along

with the weak, the poor, the oppressed, and the needy (vv. 3-4), who should be granted justice by the *ʿlôhîm*, the "gods" who sit in Yahweh's court, an expression which, as we already have indicated, points ultimately to the official rulers.

The just or righteous (*ṣaddîq*) is also referred to as an object of God's justice. On the one hand, he is the one who, like the righteous God, loves justice (11:7), who gives generously to the poor (37:21). According to Ps 112:9, the act of giving generously to the poor stands for enduring righteousness. In so doing the *ṣaddîq* is the one who practises justice, like Yahweh who was called *ṣaddîq* by Pharaoh (while in contrast calling himself and his people *rēšāʾîm*, "unjust, wicked"). Whereas the unjust Egyptians oppress, exploit and harass the Israelites, the just God shows compassion and delivers them (Ex 9:27; cf. Ps 129:4). On the other hand, because of the fact that most of those who were recognized as *ṣaddîqîm* apparently belonged to the poor class, the *ṣaddîq* is sometimes identified with the *ʿānî* and *ʿānāw*, the poor who is always in need of liberation from trouble and oppression at the hands of the wicked (cf. 37:40). A good description of the "just" is found in Pss 34 and 37. According to P. Bonnard, the idea of "virtuous man" does not apply to the righteous in the Old Testament, where, as he explains,

[ṣaddîq] is essentially the man who is approved by the king. This approval contains two nuances: it can be an explicit approval of the subject's life; but it can also be an approval that is liberation, delivering the subject either from the oppression or violence of his enemies or from the oppression of his own errors.³⁹

However, the idea of innocence or blamelessness, as pointed out in our previous chapter, associated to a legal-cultic environment, may offer a better

basis for the understanding of "just" in the Old Testament. In any case it is not tantamount to a "virtuous man". The special advent of God's justice through his Anointed One will not only represent a blessing for the poor, but also, at the same time, unavoidable punishment for their enemies. Ps 72 has a reference to them in the singular, the "oppressor" (*'ôšēq*), who will be crushed by the Ideal King (v. 4). The oppressors of the poor are mostly known as *r^ošā'îm*, "the wicked", or *rāšā'*, "wicked, unjust man", being sometimes also called *pō'ālê 'āwen*, "evildoers",⁴⁰ or *m^orē'îm*, "wicked".

They are repeatedly depicted in the psalms as oppressors, exploiters, especially of the orphan and the widow; they are bloodthirsty; they tell lies and deceive their neighbours; they practice injustice, they accept bribes; they are cunning, unmerciful, and practice violence against the weak. As the nation as such can also be oppressed by foreign powers, their hostile enemies can also be called *r^ošā'îm*. In Ps 58 they seem to be the rulers of the earth, whereas in Ps 37 the wicked is the rich man who grows in wealth and power and brings down the poor and needy. The wicked are called "the enemies of Yahweh" (v. 20). They are also the adversaries of the Ideal Davidic King, whom Yahweh shall strike down (89:22-23[23-24]).

It is because of the fact that Yahweh loves justice (37:28) that the wicked shall be destroyed (vv. 20, 28, 38), and the poor, the just, will inherit the land and enjoy abundance of peace for ever (vv. 11, 29). To love justice and hate wickedness is the normal conduct expected from a king (45:7[8]), above all from the Ideal King. Faithful to his duties and moved by love he delivers the poor and crushes the oppressor, who is to be identified with the wicked (cf. 89:22-23[23-24]). It is good news that there shall be no more room for the oppression and exploitation of the poor and weak in the coming kingdom of

justice, and such a fact far from implying an attitude of resignation in the present, rather helps to render injustice permanently intolerable.

The just acts of the King are not limited to settling disputes among individuals. The whole nation, the whole people (72:2) is to be judged, an act which involves both senses of deliverance and punishment. And this is to be carried out on the level of the internal life of the people and also on that of their life as a nation, in reference to other nations. As Yahweh did in the past, delivering Israel from her oppressor enemies, so he shall do in the future, "for Yahweh will judge his people and have compassion on his servants" (135:14). He does so because he "has chosen Jacob to be his own, Israel to be his possession" (v. 4). And he is able to vindicate his people because he is great and able to do "whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth" (v. 6). He is greater than the nations and their gods, which are made out of silver and gold by the hands of men (vv. 5-15). Psalm 97, an enthronement song, celebrates the just reign of God among the nations (vv. 1-2). He is the exalted King, the mighty King who loves justice, who has established equity, who in Jacob has executed judgment and justice, *mišpāt* and *ṣ^odāqā* (v. 4).

The belief that Yahweh surrounds his people "both now and for evermore" (125:2) may suggest among other things that he is prepared to liberate them from the exploitation, oppression, and violence of national wicked rulers and of arrogant foreign powers. For the psalmists firmly believe that "the scepter of the wicked shall not remain over the land allotted to the righteous", otherwise they could use their hands to do evil (v. 3). Injustice or wickedness has to be eradicated, for it can be contagious. Therefore Yahweh watches over the righteous, who in this case is probably his own people.

The wicked of Ps 94 are proud, arrogant, evildoers, senseless, and foolish

(vv. 3-4, 7-8). They crush the people, they oppress God's inheritance (v. 4). "They slay the widow and the alien, they murder the fatherless" (v. 5), they condemn the innocent to death (v. 21). They can be identified as rich Israelites, mighty ones among the people (vv. 1-8), and the ruling leaders (vv. 20-21), who provide legal and effective support to the former. Watching a society whose foundations are shaken, the psalmist is led to raise his voice to God expressing his just indignation (v. 20):

Can you be allied to a corrupt throne,
which produces misery on the basis of statutes?

Because of this situation of institutionalized injustice, which opens the door for the exploitation and oppression of and for violence against the poor (vv. 5, 6, 21), under the protection of the law and those who are responsible for its administration, Yahweh, the avenger, the Judge, is summoned to rise up (v. 1). The psalmist is sure that Yahweh will not reject or forsake his people, and so he hopes that "judgment (*mišpāt*) shall again be founded on justice (*ṣedeq*)" (v. 15). As Yahweh judges his people, he will turn upon the wicked their iniquity and will cut them off in their wickedness (v. 23).

Ps 50, the contents of which are reminiscent of the oracles of the classical prophets, describes the coming of Yahweh in a powerful and astounding theophany in order to judge Israel. Yahweh summons all the earth and the heavens (vv. 1-4), that is, their inhabitants, to judge or (more likely) to witness while he, Yahweh, judges his people. The heavens announce God's justice (*ṣedeq*), for he alone is judge (*šōpēṭ*), i.e., "liberator" (v. 6). In his judgment he delivers those who honour him, and rebukes the wicked within the Israelite community.

In a very special sense the coming of Yahweh to establish his universal

kingdom of justice through his Anointed One shall bring about the judgment of the nations. Israel undoubtedly plays an important role in God's purpose, but his ultimate goal comprises the whole world. Although the judgment of the nations is not explicit in Ps 72, it is, however, implied. The clear picture it presents is that of the nations already "tamed" and subject to the Ideal Just King. According to Ps 82:8, all nations become God's "inheritance", a type of expression which is elsewhere particularly applied to Israel.

This universal concern is clearly expressed in the Psalter. In just eleven of the psalms where clear or probable references to the judgment of the nations can be found (7, 9, 67, 75, 76, 82, 96, 97, 98, 110, 149; cf. also 10, 46, 47) at least fifty-eight allusions to the nations and peoples of the earth can be counted. The references are not only numerous but also quite varied in the way they are expressed. Five different Hebrew terms are used, either singly, namely *'eres*, "earth" (67:2[3]; 75:8[9]; 76:9[10], 12[13]; 82:8; 96:11, 13; 97:1, 4; 98:9), *gôyim*, "nations, gentiles" (9:5[6], 15[16], 17[8], 19[20], 20[21]; 96:3, 10; 98:2; 110:6; 149:7), *'ammîm*, "peoples" (7:8[9]; 9:11[12]; 67:3[4], 4[5], 5[6]; 96:5, 10, 13; 98:9), *tēbēl*, "world" (9:8[9]; 96:10, 13; 97:4; 98:9), and *l^o'ummîm*, "peoples" (9:8[9]; 67:4[5]; 149:7), or as the basic component of twelve compound expressions, "the peoples of the earth" (67:4[5]), "all the ends of the earth" (67:7[8]; 98:3), "all dwellers of the earth" (75:3[4]), "all the earth" (96:1, 9; 97:5, 9; 98:4), "the whole earth" (110:6), "the foundations of the earth" (82:5), "all the nations" (67:2[3]; 82:8), "all the peoples" (*'ammîm kullām*, 67:3[4], 5[6]; *kol-hā'ammîm*, 96:3), "the families of peoples" (96:7), "the world and its dwellers" (98:7), and "the assembly of peoples" (7:7[8]). In two other expressions none of those terms appear, but the idea is implied: *kol-s^obîbîm*, "all round about (nations)" (76:11[12]), and *'iyyîm rabbîm*, "many isles (or sea coasts, distant shores)" (97:1).

However we explain the role of these words and expressions in the psalms, from a cultic perspective, they undoubtedly represent a basic component of Israel's future hope, namely its universal dimension, encompassing all the nations of the world. The coming of Yahweh in the person of his representative, the Anointed One, shall involve a titanic confrontation with the earthly powers. He comes as a warrior, holding mighty weapons, as suggested in the texts of a theophanic nature, including the great final theophany (18:12-14[13-15]; 76:3-6[4-7], 10-12[11-13]; 97:2-7; 110). He comes to return to the wicked their own evil, as he normally does (7:14-16[15-17]; 9:15-16[16-17]; cf. 64:7-8[8-9]), to strike them down and to deliver and lift up the just, the innocent, as he is known to do (7:9[10]; 9:5-6[6-7]; 75:4-10[5-11]; 82:2; 97:10-12).

God's punishment seems to be more especially designed for the kings, rulers, and nobles of the nations, whose injustice has caused the foundations of the earth to shake, by plotting against men and their environment, by protecting the wicked and oppressing the poor (82:2-5). Their social, political, and moral corruption invariably affects the order of Creation. As the opposite of justice, injustice causes destruction in all orders and at all levels. But the Psalms point to their judgment in a rather sturdy fashion, making use of violent images of warfare. They state that Yahweh will break their arrogant and terror-inspiring spirit (76:12[13]), he will crush them in the day of wrath (110:5-6), he will bind them with fetters and shackles of iron (149:7-8).

The character of their judgment as conceived in the Psalms is clearly expressed in the New Testament (Rev 11:18), in a context which deals with the establishment of God's kingdom and the judgment of the nations: "The time has come . . . for destroying those who destroy the earth". They are taken as

chiefly responsible for the destructive injustice prevailing on earth. And their injustice is ultimately verified on the basis of their attitude toward the poor, the weak, the humble, the afflicted, the needy, the fatherless, and the widow (9:9[10], 12[13], 18[19]; 82:3, 4; 76:9[10]; 149:4).

An echo of this important aspect of "eschatological" justice is again found in the New Testament, namely in Mt 25:31-46, which deals with the judgment of the nations. There the criteria for distinguishing the "goats" (destined to destruction) from the "sheep" are their attitudes toward the poor and oppressed, depicted in the categories of those who are in want, the alien, the sick, and the prisoner (interestingly the same categories that are predominant in the lament psalms). It is clearly stated in the Psalms that it is because of the cry of the poor and needy that Yahweh shall arise and come to deliver them from those "who malign them" (9:12[13]; 12:5[6]). This is what is basically meant when we read a text like this:

Yahweh shall sit (enthroned) for ever,
 he established his throne for (the) judgment;
 He shall judge the world with justice,
 he shall judge the peoples with equity.
 He shall be a refuge for the oppressed,
 a refuge in times of trouble.
 (9:7-9[8-10]; cf. 10:16-18; 76:8-9[9-10])

It is true that these statements can be taken in the present, as a cultic expression of Israel's faith, but it is precisely this type of faith that is projected by hope into the future, when a real judgment of the nations is expected to take place.

Probably drawing on the experience of the Exodus as a major source of imagery, the psalmists depict Yahweh's universal judgment as a disclosure of mighty acts of deliverance and punishment, involving great signs and wonders

in their accomplishment. By virtue of a metonymy, to refer to wonders or to any other associated idea is equivalent to referring to the whole experience. In this sense, reference is made to God's "wondrous deeds" which are to be joyfully declared among the nations (96:3; 98:1; 9:1[2]), or even to his "terror" (9:20[21]) and the "awesome deeds of his justice" 65:5[6]). The same connotation is found in the references to God's "salvation", or "glory", or "justice", which are proclaimed and seen by all the peoples, by all the ends of the earth (96:2-3; 97:6; 98:2).

The formidable confrontation between Yahweh and the earthly powers, i.e., the judgment of the nations, is part of the process of the establishment of justice on earth, which eventually ensures worldwide dominion to the Anointed One, his viceroy. And the other corollaries of such an era of justice shall be universal blessedness, peace and prosperity. The proclamation of the advent of a just social order of such magnitude is surely good news for the poor and bad news for their oppressors, whether they be individuals, social classes, or nations.

5.3. AN IDEAL WORLD ORDER BUILT ON JUSTICE

As the title above suggests the foundation of the God's ruling project through his Anointed One is justice, which as we have demonstrated is chiefly expressed in the deliverance of the weak, the poor, and the oppressed. Such a solid foundation is expected to produce the best possible results for the integration of human society in social, economic, and spiritual terms allied to a perfect harmony with the natural environment. This wide realm of life affected by God's justice, as introduced by Ps 72, is the object of our following exposition. However, since a great deal of what could be said under the present topic has already been touched upon elsewhere in this chapter, we

shall aim at brevity.

5.3.1. Worldwide Dominion

These are the verses of Ps 72 which most directly deal with the theme of worldwide dominion under the rule of God's viceroy, the Ideal Davidic King:

And may he rule from sea to sea,
 and from the river unto the ends of the earth!
 May his adversaries bow down before him,
 and his enemies lick the dust!
 May the kings of Tarshish and of the islands bring gifts,
 may the kings of Sheba and Seba offer him presents!
 May all kings bow down before him,
 may all the nations serve him!
 (72:8-11)

Just as one might expect, the text introduces geographical allusions, usually of difficult identification, very much conditioned by the knowledge of the psalmist's times. But their intent is to show a varied world scene, which includes different races and regions, far and near, which now pay homage to the Davidic King.

Tarshish is usually identified as the Phoenician colony of Tartessus in Spain. Cyrus Gordon believes that it must be somewhere on the shores of the Atlantic (which include the New World!), for besides other reasons it could be reached from the Mediterranean port of Jaffa (Jonah 1:3) or the Red Sea port of Ezion-Geber (2 Chr 20:36).⁴¹ The "islands", following Gordon's arguments, might well include transoceanic areas.⁴² Sheba, home country of the queen who came to visit king Solomon, could probably be Arabia Felix (modern Yemen). The Sabaeen kingdom which flourished in Arabia at that time may be the reference here. Seba could be a Sabaeen colony somewhere in Africa or on the coast of southwest Arabia. For Flavius Josephus it was in Ethiopia.⁴³

The phrase "from sea to sea" in v. 8 has been interpreted as a possible

reference to the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf (or the Red Sea, in the light of Ex 23:31), while "river" (*nāhār*) is usually taken as a reference to the Euphrates. This would point to a possible influence on the poet's language of the court style of the Babylonian world, which Johnson denies. He believes that

. . . the reference, far from being an allusion to the Euphrates, is really an allusion to the current of the great cosmic sea which nourishes the holy city . . . Similarly the expression "from sea to sea", far from denoting, say, the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf, is really an allusion in general terms to the all-embracing cosmic sea and, taken in conjunction with the expression "from the 'river' to the ends of the earth", points to the thought of a sovereignty covering the wide circle of the earth.⁴⁴

Accordingly, a parallel to v. 8 found in Zech 9:10 points to a universal, boundless dominion, and this is how v. 8 must be understood. It is indeed a worldwide government that is asked for in the prayer of Ps 72 (see especially v. 11) on behalf of the Davidic king, probably seen here as Yahweh's representative on earth.

When the psalms affirm that Yahweh will come to judge the world, what is implied is more than the destruction of the earthly powers of oppression and death in order to free the poor and needy. As the verb *šāpat* already indicates by its double meaning ("to judge" and "to rule"), it is believed that Yahweh will be in charge of the nations, as a sovereign, almighty King. This is made even clearer when *šāpat* is used in parallelism with *nāhāh*, "to lead, guide":

For you shall judge (or rule) the peoples justly,
and shall lead the nations of the earth (67:4[5])

The hope of a worldwide kingdom under God's leadership in the person of the Davidic king is expressively captured in the book of Revelation (11:15),

which, in Old Testament terminology, would read: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of Yahweh and of his Anointed One, and he will reign for ever and ever".

The new just order brought about and preserved by Yahweh's viceroy is not only designed for the whole world, but in fact it has got to be built on an international scale. Justice and peace in this world can only be effective when international relations are also properly affected. Thus, world dominion, an obsessive dream of mighty conquerors throughout history, is destined finally to become a desirable and welcome reality under Yahweh's royal representative, endowed with his justice and judgment. His dominion would be an answer to the perennial problem of injustice which affects life on a worldwide scale, and also a denouncing of the pretensions to world control of imperialistic governments or political systems based on covetousness and injustice, the power of which is built at the cost of the oppression of the poor and needy and the devastation of Nature.

If injustice at different levels is ultimately the essential cause of the collapse of world powers and the vital obstruction to the consolidation of new claims for world dominion, such shall not be the problem in the Ideal Kingdom depicted in Ps 72. The king's sovereign authority shall be far and wide acknowledged by all peoples precisely because of his acts of justice on behalf of the poor. This is made clear by the use of the causal particle *kî*, "for", at the beginning of v. 12. To take *kî* here as an emphatic particle ("certainly")⁴⁵ is not only unnecessary; it is probably also a mistake. It seems evident that the world pays homage to the king as a result of his acts of justice, in delivering the poor, the weak, the needy, the oppressed (vv. 12-14).

The oriental images of subjection employed in vv. 8-11 ("bow down", "lick

the dust", "serve", and the offering of presents and gifts) are intended to express utter subjection on the part of the rulers and peoples of the earth. The phrase "lick the dust", which also implies an act of self-humiliation, is also found in Is 49:23 and Mi 7:17 in reference to the homage and subjection of the nations to the messianic dignitary, the representative of Yahweh. This overall subjection to the king points to the end of traditional enmities and hostilities among the nations, making viable the prospects of real peace and prosperity in the world, within a new and stable sociopolitical order founded on justice.

5.3.2. The Promotion of Peace and Prosperity

The relevant verses of Ps 72 in the light of our present topic are 3, 6-8, and 16, which we quote:

Let the mountains bring forth peace to the people,
and the hills, through justice!
May he descend like rain on the mown grass,
like showers that water the earth!
Let justice flourish in his days,
and peace abound till the moon be no more!
Let there be abundance of grain in the land;
let its fruit wave on the mountain tops like Lebanon;
may men blossom from the city like the herb of the earth!

By synecdoche "mountains" and "hills" in v. 3 may be referring to the whole land, the people's main source of food and goods, of subsistence in short. Their abundant production is called *šālôm*, a term usually rendered as "peace" or "prosperity". However, the term "prosperity" as it is understood in our modern, western, capitalistic society (namely the process of becoming rich directly or indirectly at the expenses of others under the rules--legal or otherwise--of the prevailing economic system) is not adequate to express the meaning of *šālôm*, which here denotes the overflowing satisfaction of the people's basic needs, also including a consequent spirit of confidence and security. Such a "peace" is made possible when "justice" determines the

distribution, use, and care of the land. It is quite possible that the radical principles of the Year of Jubilee in Lv 25 lie somewhere in the background here.⁴⁶ The association of "justice", "land", and "peace" may also be found in Is 32:16, 17 (cf. 45:8) as a result of the work of the Spirit which is poured from on high. God, men, and Creation join together in jubilant and harmonic symphony when justice (God's $\text{š}^{\text{e}}\text{dāqā}$) is fully established on earth.

The showers, so desperately needed in the land that it may yield its crops, are understood to be blessings granted by Yahweh to his people when obedient to his ordinances of justice, or *mišpātîm*. Thus the practice of justice in obedience to God is the way to ensure the regularity of rains in the land. This explains why the advent of the Ideal King is compared with the fall of rain, and justice associated with abundance of peace (vv. 3 and 6), which here basically denotes abundant crops. A chain of elements linked by the cause-effect principle is thus established: The practice of justice (or the advent of justice embodied in the person of the Just King) ensures the fall of rain, which ensures abundant provision of crops or food for all, which is a *sine qua non* condition for "peace". Both in the biblical sense and in the modern acceptance peace is dependent on justice and cannot be fully enjoyed without it. Thus in loaded and imaginative poetical language v. 6 expresses the idea that like life-giving showers the king shall be a blessing to his people. A somewhat parallel passage, also comparing a king who governs in justice with pleasant natural phenomena, is found in David's last words, as recorded in 2 Sam 23:3b-4:

When one rules justly over men,
ruling in the fear of God,
he downs on them like the morning light,
like the sun shining forth upon a cloudless morning,
like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth.⁴⁷

The idea of plentifulness is also dominant in v. 16, according to which abundance of grain is to be found not only in the valleys, where the soil is usually fertile, but even on top of the mountains, where fertility is normally not expected. Furthermore this idea is here expressed by the use of two poetic comparisons. First, it is said that on the mountain tops "its fruit" (i.e. the corn) shall shake (*yir'aš*), i.e. shall wave like the forests of Lebanon when moved by the wind (as we know, the beauty, fertility and riches of Lebanon's forests were proverbial in ancient times). Murphy argues that *yir'aš* is "entirely too strong to be used in such a gentle context as this where it describes the delicate movements of the corn".⁴⁸ But such an assumption is almost certainly a mistake, for as we know it is through some sort of exaggeration or apparent inappropriateness that poetic language reveals the richness of its expressivity, besides the fact that it is primarily in the light of the context that the meaning of the word should be determined.

The second simile is seen in the phrase, "like the herb (or grass) of the earth". It may be referring to the people of the cities who "blossom", i.e. have their offspring multiplied like the herb of the earth. The same terms of comparison are found in Job 5:25, which is part of a list of some special blessings (recited by Eliphaz but expression of a common faith) which God has in store for his faithful ones:

You shall know also that your descendants shall be many,
and your offspring as the grass of the earth.

Accordingly, one of the features of the messianic era is an extraordinary increase in the human population (cf. Is 9:3[2]; 49:20; Zech 2:8; Ps 110:3). Nevertheless, the stich "May they blossom from (or out of) the city" could also be interpreted as referring to the crops or sheaves that, seen from the city,

cover the land as the herb of the earth.

It has become clear that in the days of the Just King God's justice is not only to be expressed in the deliverance of the weak and the poor from the hands of their oppressors, but even the benevolence and prodigality of Nature (through the regularity of showers, fertility of the soil, and abundance of crops) is seen as part of the integrating and harmonic expression of justice, which makes possible the superabundant production of provisions and--it has to be inferred here--promotes its equitable distribution according to the needs of the people. Justice and peace shall indeed "flourish", a highly expressive poetic image, which besides connoting their becoming a reality, coming into being, also suggests that their increase is like the increase of the crops that witness their very presence.

Unlike the prevalent view of our modern western society controlled by the strict rules of a market economy, in the realm of the Just King who cares for the poor and needy, overproduction is not seen as a problem, but rather as a welcome blessing ensured by God's benevolence in controlling the natural elements, and by the king's just control and management of the land and its production. Increase in population is likewise a blessing, not a social menace as presently reckoned in our society. All this is possible, as our psalm shows, because the Anointed One of Yahweh shall reign in justice.

Although the psalmists do not conceive of "peace" as merely being the absence of war, God's universal judgment and rule over the nations in justice is expected to bring about peace to the world which is also expressed in the ceasing of war and the most aggressive and effective disarmament policy: the destruction of all weapons of war:

Come, behold the works of Yahweh,
 who has wrought desolations on the earth.
 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
 he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear,
 he burns the chariots in the fire.
 (Ps 46:8-10; cf. 76:3; 68:30)

Once the powers of oppression are crushed and their deadly weapons destroyed, the way is paved for the full realization of God's promised *šālôm* (85:8-10[9-11]). His just rule promotes peace, for, personified as if they were Yahweh's messengers or servants, "justice (*šedeq*) and peace (*šālôm*) kiss each other" (v. 10[11]). As already indicated, true, lasting peace is only possible as the fruit of justice, which neutralizes the threat of chaos in all areas and at all levels, including the natural order which shares in the plight of the poor by being irrationally exploited and irresponsibly devastated due to the insatiable greed of the few who unjustly keep the land and the economic power under their control. Once men and Creation are freed from their bonds, thanks to the worldwide prevailing spirit of justice, fertility and production are supposed to increase everywhere and be equitably enjoyed by all, attesting the full and final reconciliation between God, man, and Creation. The Psalms have abundant references to this triangular harmony (cf. 147:14; 67:6[7]; 65:9[10], 11-13[12-14]; 144:12-14).

The poor, who are forced to live in want and need, shall now be satisfied with food (132:15), for all this abundance of provisions is granted by God and yielded by the land restored in its fertility as a particular expression of God's justice on their behalf. It is even quite possible that the hope of such a blessed future takes for granted a process of redistribution of land reminiscent of that recorded in the Conquest narrative. Ps 37 bears witness to the faith/hope that the wicked (wealthy landlords who prosper and oppress the poor and needy) will be destroyed, while the poor, the humble "shall inherit

the land and enjoy great peace" (v. 11). They are the righteous or innocent who shall "inherit the land and dwell in it forever" (v. 29; cf. vv. 9, 18, 22, 34). The access of the poor to the land and other means of production made possible by justice is an important aspect of the peace (*šālôm*) that comes to Israel and the nations under Yahweh's Anointed ruler.

Standing before God's astounding irruption into human history, when his justice is disclosed in the sight of the nations as liberating power to save the humble of the earth, and the grandeur and magnificence of his rule of peace, all the peoples (basically all the dehumanized and suffering masses now with new prospects of life) cannot help but worship and serve the Lord and shout for joy (cf. 65:13[14]). The fulness of justice to be disclosed in this "eschatological" age brings about peace (abundance for all) which generates deep and resounding joy (*śimhâ, gîl*).

The Israelites rejoice because of God's blessings to them (48:11[12]), and the nations also shout to God with cries of joy for what he has done to Israel (47:1-4[2-5]). On the other hand, the earth, all distant continents rejoice before the splendour and awesomeness of Yahweh's theophany (97:1-6). But it is essentially Yahweh's just rule that arouse deep joy, which strongly resounds in the heavens and on earth, through all the universe:

Say among the nations, "Yahweh reigns!"
 Yea, the world⁴⁹ shall be established so that it shall
 not be moved;
 he will judge the peoples with equity.
 The heavens shall be glad, and the earth shall rejoice;
 the sea and its fulness shall resound;
 the field and all that is in it shall exult.
 Then all the trees of the forest shall shout for joy
 before Yahweh, for he comes,
 for he comes to judge the earth.
 He will judge the world with justice
 and the peoples in his fidelity.
 (96:10-13)

Ps 98 shows how all the earth shouts for joy before Yahweh, the King, and bursts into jubilant song with music (v. 4). But not only humankind rejoices. In a magnificent poetic description (similar to that of 96 which we just quoted) the inanimate elements (sea, rivers, mountains), now vividly personified, join all the creatures which dwell in the world and the sons of Adam in a joyful symphony of praise for God's re-creation of the world in justice. Man and Creation pay homage to the One who is at the same time Creator, King, Judge, and Saviour. This prophetic-like vision is particularly described in three of the Enthronement Psalms, namely 96-98.

5.3.3. An Enduring Order of Blessedness

The appropriate passages of Ps 72 which shall now be the main object of our attention are vv. 5, 15, 17-19:

And may he live with the sun,
 and before the moon through all generations!
 And (long) may he live,
 and may there be given to him of the gold of sheba!
 May men pray for him continually,
 may they bless him all day long!
 May his name be forever,
 may his name endure as long as the sun!
 May men bless themselves in him,
 may all nations call him blessed!
 Blessed be Yahweh God, the God of Israel,
 who alone does wondrous things!
 And blessed be his glorious name for ever;
 and may the whole earth be filled with his glory!
 Amen and Amen!

It would not be enough simply to say that such a text reflects the exaggerations proper to the ancient Near Eastern court style. The real exaggeration--I would dare to say--seems to be its conventional application to the reigning or enthroned king, for the eyes of those who pray must certainly be particularly geared toward the Ideal King of the future. At any rate the text is ambiguous, especially in connection with the question of longevity,

as we already have pointed out in Textual Note 17a (p. 255). The ambiguity corresponds neatly to another one: If the reigning king is the point of reference, longevity is attained through his offspring, the continuation of the king's posterity or dynasty, as promised to David. If the Ideal King of the future is the reference, extraordinary longevity or unceasing existence is more likely to be the case.

The main fact, however, which is plain in whichever way we read the text, is that the new order of justice expected to be established in Israel and among the nations is not something seasonal, like an encouraging experience of short duration, or a promising revolution which is soon superseded by another revolution. The text lays strong emphasis on the aspect of continuity. The king shall live on and with him a new society born out of and sustained by justice.

Another aspect of this future kingdom of justice stressed by Ps 72, particularly in the group of verses we have quoted above, is its outstanding spiritual character, its prevailing atmosphere of blessedness which profusely flows in two directions: from God toward the peoples, and from the peoples toward God and his king, the Messiah. Whereas God sends abundant blessings upon the earth and its inhabitants, of which the king and his just reign is also an expression, the peoples rejoice and bless God and his king. The installation of such a remarkable era of justice and peace invariably leads the peoples and nations to fear, praise, and worship God, the upholder of *mišpāt*, *ṣedeq* and *ṣ'ḏāqā*. Not only individuals, like the lamenter of Ps 7, shall be led to say, "I will give thanks to Yahweh because of his justice" (v.17[18]), but in fact

All the ends of the earth shall remember
and turn to Yahweh;
and all the families of the nations
shall worship before him.⁵⁰
For dominion belongs to Yahweh,

and he rules over the nations.
(22:27-28[28-29])

These verses are part of what seems to be a prophetic oracle attached to an expression of thanksgiving which follows a lament psalm, giving evidence that the suppliant's cry was heard by God. The reason for his praise (v. 24[25]) is the same in nature as that which compels the nations to bless the Almighty God and his king:

For he has not despised or abhorred
the affliction of the poor;
and he has not hid his face from him,
but has heard when he cried to him.

The ceremonial meal following the ritual of thanksgiving, especially designed for the poor who has been saved by Yahweh from his affliction (notably oppression by the wicked rich), becomes a prototype of the blessed era of peace, when again, but on a worldwide scale, "the poor shall eat and be satisfied" (22:26a[27a]). So it is no wonder that posterity shall serve him and proclaim his justice (vv. 30-31[31-32]), which then becomes the "good news" of the kingdom of God. All the earth, all the peoples of the world shall fear and revere the Lord, because he loves justice and judgment (33:5, 8).

If, on the one hand, the worshipping community, the righteous and upright praise God because he secures justice for the poor and needy (140:12-13[13-14]), on the other hand, it is the oppressed, the poor and needy themselves, predominantly counted among the righteous, who praise God for their own deliverance (74:21). Likewise, in regard to Ps 113, among those who are called to praise Yahweh "from the rising of the sun to its setting" (v. 3) for his wonderful deeds on behalf of the poor, the needy, and the barren woman

(vv. 7-9), must also be included those who have been favoured by God. The fact is that what is witnessed to in the Israelite cultus becomes a prototype of a larger and universal experience in the new theocratic age of justice, when the people at large join the poor and oppressed in their praises and worship for God's wondrous deeds of liberation.

The word *nīplā'ôṭ*, "wondrous deeds" (72:18), is usually applied to God's great interventions in Nature and history on behalf of his people, and is especially used in the case of their liberation from Egypt. There could be no better word to qualify what God is expected to do through his Anointed One as described in Ps 72. The person of the just king is prominent in the whole picture, but ultimately all praises are due to God, for, as Weiser rightly points out,

the king's reign and its blessing are the reflection of the sovereign rule of God and of his salvation, and his fame is overshadowed by the 'glory' *kābôd* of God who alone does wondrous things.⁵¹

Ps 72:19b recalls Nu 14:21-22 where the glory of Yahweh is associated with the "miraculous signs performed in Egypt and in the desert". Here in our psalm the glory which fills the whole earth is to be seen in association with God's extraordinary deeds as described throughout the poem, especially his works of justice, performed through the Davidic king, his representative. In both cases the glory of God is revealed when the sociohistorical reality of oppression-liberation is the central issue.

It is in view of such wonderful things, which, as we have said, essentially comprise God's mighty acts of deliverance of the poor of the earth and the corresponding punishment of the wicked, that the nations are said to turn to the Lord:

All nations you have made shall come
 and shall bow down before you, O Lord,
 and shall glorify your name.
 For you are great and do wondrous things,
 you alone are God.
 (86:9-10; cf. 65:8[9]; 64:9[10])

God's appearing in glory and the rebuilding of Zion in Ps 102:15-17[16-18] is not properly a reason for, but the occasion when the nations and kings of the earth shall fear and revere the name and the glory of Yahweh:

The nations will fear the name of the Yahweh,
 and all the kings of the earth your glory.
 For Yahweh will build up Zion,
 he will appear in his glory;
 he will regard the prayer of the destitute,
 and shall not despise their supplication.

In 76:7-10[8-11] it is God's wrath against the wicked oppressors which brings him praise:

But you, you are terrible!
 Who can stand before you
 when once your anger is roused?
 From the heavens you uttered judgments;
 the earth feared and was still,
 when God arose to establish judgment,
 to save all the oppressed of the earth.
 Surely the wrath of men shall praise you;
 the remainder of wrath you will gird upon you.

In 148:11-14 the kings, princes, and all rulers of the earth, all peoples, young and old men, maidens and children alike, are summoned to praise Yahweh for the glory of his name, but also in particular because he has raised a king for his people. In Ps 67 it is for the abundance of provisions and for the fact that God judges the peoples with equity and rules over the nations that these are summoned to praise God. In all these cases the curtain that separates present and future, cultic liturgy and prophetic hope, is very thin. The fact remains that from whichever perspective we look at the evidence, the

fundamental reason for the whole world to fear, praise, and worship Yahweh is his remarkable advent in the person of his Anointed One, the Ideal Davidic King, to judge the nations in justice, a fact which is basically manifested in the overthrow of the wicked and the deliverance of the poor and oppressed from their power.

CONCLUSIONS

In spite of the original cultic setting of most of the psalms, which is properly stressed by modern Old Testament scholarship, the Psalter is highly "eschatological" in its nature and orientation, i.e. it has as much to say about the future, and a far remote future, as it says about the present. In this connection it is not pure coincidence that the psalms are believed to have been closely associated with cultic prophecy, and to bear witness to the religious institutions and spiritual environment which were intrinsically influential in the whole prophetic movement.

They are poems of faith and hope in which the thought moves back and forth in time, but the movement is somehow ultimately driven and oriented toward the future, carrying with it the images and symbols of the past and the projected experiences of the present. This is perfectly in harmony with their cultic origin and usage, as the experience of worship essentially points to the future, to the fulness of the reality which is only partially anticipated. As a kind of supra-temporal experience, the worship joins past and future in a "cultic present", when the former is remembered (made alive and effective) and the latter is tasted in anticipation, as a sign of (and means of ensuring) its full realization. The Christian celebration of the Lord's Supper could be mentioned as an example.

The future hope in the psalms has basically to do with the coming of

Yahweh as King, or God's awesome epiphany to bring about the establishment of a universal and lasting kingdom of justice (an accomplished theocracy of which the tribal confederacy ruled by heroic libertarian leaders, the Judges, is but only a shadow) under the leadership of the Ideal Davidic King, his Anointed One, in order to judge and lead the nations. The element that makes this hope precious, that constitutes its fundamental concern is God's justice. With the Lord's coming there will finally be fulness of justice on earth.

Justice, however, is not seen as cold neutrality, in a forensic sense, but rather as a dynamic commitment to the cause of the poor and oppressed. It is expressed in judgment, which implies the deliverance of one party and the correlative punishment of the other. The liberation of the poor, the needy, the weak, the oppressed is the fundamental expression of justice, is the essential feature which reveals its true nature. And such an accomplishment, in the clear language of Ps 72, is made possible when the oppressors, usually known as "the wicked", the enemies of Yahweh, are utterly defeated or "crushed".

As the earthly powers of death and chaos are destroyed, the oppressors crushed and the poor delivered, justice brings about peace on earth, which is not only seen as absence of war among the nations, a fact which is already in itself an amazing accomplishment, but which is also pictured as a universal rest for men and Creation, the vitality of which is exuberantly restored. Its prodigality and proverbial abundance is also called peace, pointing to the overflowing satisfaction of the basic needs of humanity. Full reconciliation and close harmony is brought about between God, man, and Creation, pointing to the end of the curse of Gn 3.

The universal acclamation and subjection of the peoples to the reign of the Anointed One of Yahweh is due to its solid foundations on justice. In this

boundless kingdom the spiritual or religious dimension is not absent or apart from the struggles of ordinary life. The integration is so perfect that the antitheses religious/secular becomes meaningless. And this universal spiritual awakening (the peoples and nations turning to the Lord) is shown to be but a direct result of the king's acts of justice in delivering the poor and humble of the earth. It is indeed quite a thrilling experience to be able to envisage, within this new sociopolitical reality built on justice, the extraordinary fact that all the peoples of the earth will fear and worship God, and joyfully praise him continually.

Yet, through a vigorous poetic depiction, stress is laid on the element of joy, as humankind and Creation burst into shouts of joy to praise their Redeemer, their Deliverer and King. This emphasis on joy in connection with God's reign of justice in the Psalms seems to be indicating how universal, deep, and desperate is the humble's need for justice. Their cry resounds throughout the centuries, as they suffer and witness the accumulation of injustice, which openly affronts their Creator and Redeemer. Nevertheless, their hope is renewed and supported by the psalmodic tradition, which conveys the ever-present good news that Yahweh will hear their cry and will come to deliver them. It is no wonder that Jesus, acclaimed by the Church as the Messiah, the Anointed One of Yahweh, said in the Sermon on the Mount:

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice,
for they will be filled (Mt 5:6)

As for the Israelite community, far from seeing themselves alienated from the ideal of justice described in connection with Yahweh's kingdom to come, they saw it as an ideal to be historically pursued, as principle to be applied, a

standard by which their official ruling class were to be judged, as witnessed by the prophets. In fact the whole community, the whole nation is to be judged according to this single principle of justice, according to their attitude toward the poor, a truth which finds in Ps 72 one of its brightest and most eloquent expressions.

CHAPTER 6

HOPE FOR THE POOR AND OPPRESSED

IN THE PROPHETIC LITERATURE

We have already made a number of references to and quotations from the prophets in the previous chapters. But from now on they shall be the object of our exclusive attention, although there is no need for an extensive treatment of the subject throughout the prophetic corpus. In this chapter we shall take a brief walk on the well trodden ground of the prophetic indictments, but we shall limit our considerations (since the material is vast and quite repetitive) to the eighth century prophets, with particular emphasis on Amos. The striking importance of such indictments and the hope to which they give rise within the global context of the prophetic message, and the passionate tone in which they are presented, will be emphasized.

It is here assumed that the message of the prophets represent a beam of hope for the poor and oppressed in two basic ways. First we have their critical words of indictment, denouncing the social injustices of their time, normally followed by a threat of Divine judgment. They put themselves on the side of the poor in the name of Yahweh, explicitly or implicitly backed up by some form of the covenant tradition. Their message is God's voice which resounds (metaphorically as the roar of a lion, in the case of Amos) as Divine answer to the cry of the poor and afflicted, who suffer merciless oppression in the hands of the rich and powerful.

Though such a prophetic preaching has primarily to do with its historical present, its voice, however, through the written records that have been faithfully preserved, has endured throughout the ages, as God's ever present challenge to the oppressors of the poor, and as a live spark that arouses

people's consciousness everywhere, and inspires them to join those who, in the practice of God's justice, struggle on behalf of the poor and downtrodden.

A message with such a power has to be acknowledged as a vital source of hope, not less in a long historical perspective than at the time when it was first proclaimed. There seem to be those who would like to deny the effectiveness of the prophets's message in the lives of their contemporaries, asserting that it was not successful. Whether or not this is true, very much depends on the concept of "success" that one has in mind. It is a fact that the cross of Jesus of Nazareth was an utter defeat in the view of the Romans, and besides a shameful disgrace in the sight of the Jews, but for the Christians that, as we know, is not the whole truth. At any rate, the significant role that the message of the prophets has directly or indirectly played in the formation of the human consciousness and in the promotion of sociopolitical reforms and revolutions throughout history is a fact that can and must be acknowledged.

The other way in which the message of the prophets represent hope for the poor is spelled out in their words of expectation of a new future for the people of God, envisaging a time of peace and prosperity, when there shall be fulness of justice for the poor and oppressed. This type of hope is the chief concern expressed in the prophetic pieces dealing with the coming ideal king, and will be the object of our study in the next chapter. As we have already had the opportunity to point out, such a hope is not to be understood as futurist escapism, but rather as the outlook to an ideal future which is presented as promised by God and which is always supposed to bear on the present life experience of his people.

6.1. PROPHETS AND POLITICAL AFFAIRS IN THE EIGHTH CENTURY B.C.

The eighth century prophets were not like philosophers who, having their minds immersed in the ocean of universal thought expressed in axioms and aphorisms, may quite easily overlook the concrete historical realities that surround them day by day. But they were not even like the religious mystics, whose radical commitment to a contemplative life forcibly deprives them from actively participating in the ordinary course of historical events. Rather, they are not only understood as having lived and preached in a given time and place, within specific historical circumstances, but also as having addressed the concrete human and sociopolitical situations of their times. Such a significant fact is first witnessed to by the superscription that appears in each one of the eighth century prophetic books (Am 1:1; Ho 1:1; Is 1:1; Mi 1:1), pointing to the pertinent political history to which the prophetic message is related and over against which it is to be understood.

It is part of our common knowledge that two of these prophets, namely Amos and Hosea, directed their messages to Ephraim, the northern Israelite kingdom, before the fall of Samaria in 721 B.C. and the other two, namely Isaiah and Micah, addressed their words to Judah, the southern Israelite kingdom, in the last decades of the century. Thus the period of their prophetic activity covered roughly half a century, i.e. from ca. 750 B.C., when Amos left Tekoa (Am 1:1; 7:12), his home town in the hill country of Judah, in the southeast of Jerusalem, to preach in Bethel, the city sanctuary of northern Israel, to ca. 700 B.C., when the last words of Isaiah are likely to have been heard in Jerusalem. Deep changes took place in the international scene of the Ancient Near East at that time, with Israel, Judah, and other small nations left utterly shaken to their foundations, as they were located on the eastern Mediterranean corridor, pressed between two superpowers, Egypt and Assyria,

which had colliding invested interests in the region, given the strategic importance of its position.

Since the details of the political history of this period is easily available in any relevant biblical commentary and in the standard histories of the Old Testament,¹ it will suffice here to recall briefly three major political crises in the region which profoundly affected Israel and Judah, and which had a significant bearing on the message of the eighth century prophets:

1) The first one was the anti-Assyrian coalition led by Israel and Syria in 735-32 B.C. and their serious attempt to force Judah into the alliance (cf. Ho 5:8-14; Is 7:1-17), which resulted in the fall of Damascus in 732 B.C. under the Assyrian army commanded by Tiglath-pileser.

2) The second one took place in the period 724-21 B.C., marked by the revolt of the king of Israel against Assyrian suzerain control, apparently a calculated move encouraged by the death of Tiglath-pileser in 727 B.C. This resulted in the siege of Samaria by Shalmanezar V and its final capitulation in 721 B.C. under Sargon II, who carried a great number of Israelites into exile (cf. Ho 8:1-10; Is 10:5-19; Mi 1:2-7).

3) Finally we have the crucial crisis of 712-701 B.C. when, backed by promises of Egyptian military aid, Judah and some Phoenician and Philistine cities were actively involved in a widespread anti-Assyrian outburst of rebellion. As a result the movement of rebellion was successssfully crushed by Sennacherib during his campaign of 701 B.C., when he overrun the territory of Judah, capturing--as stated in his annals--forty-six walled towns and countless villages, and carried 200,250 people into captivity (though the figure seems highly exaggerated), after laying siege to Jerusalem and imposing heavy

tribute on Hezekiah (cf. Is 1:4-9; 18:1-5; 19:1-15; 20; Mi 1:10-16).²

It should also be noted, however, that these periods of crises followed a long spell of peace and prosperity for both Israel and Judah. The classic assertion does not seem unwarranted that as a young man Isaiah witnessed "the rapid development of Judah into a strong commercial and military state; for under Uzziah Judah attained a degree of prosperity and strength not enjoyed since the days of Solomon".³ Uzziah, also called Azariah (ca. 783-42 B.C. or 787-36 B.C.), built walls, towers, and fortifications. Counting with a large standing army he was successful against the Philistines and captured Gath, Ashdod and Jabneh (2 Ch 26:6). He also defeated the Arabians and received tribute from the Ammonites. He rebuilt towns and the maritime port of Elath on the Red Sea, which was of great commercial importance.

It is also traditionally believed that under Jeroboam II, his contemporary (ca. 786-46 or 787-47 B.C.), the northern kingdom likewise enjoyed unprecedented political stability and economic prosperity which also involved territorial expansion.⁴ Both Uzziah and Jeroboam had long and seemingly prosperous reigns, but along with wealth and power social and religious problems became also evident, especially in Israel. Those were times of religious effervescence, but such religiosity, alienated and futile, proved insensitive to the cry and affliction of the poor, being rather conniving with the prevailing state of social corruption, avarice and oppression of the powerless, particularly of the peasant farmers (*dallîm*), who were very often deprived of their land and reduced to the position of labourers. As G. W. Anderson states,

The plight of the poorer members of the community was made the more miserable because of the widespread corruption of the administration of justice: the rich were not slow to

take advantage of the venality of judges and witnesses. Thus, in place of the ancient principle of brotherhood in Israelite society, there had arisen a new order in which a wide gulf separated separated the rich from the poor.⁵

Although the message of the prophets was closely related to the context of international politics, however, it cannot be explained as simply a theological interpretation of political events. The chief concern of Amos, for instance, was with the human and moral aspects of God's people's situation rather than with politics *per se*. If the clouds were dark on the historical horizon of Israel, indicating that the storm of Divine judgment was nigh, that was because society was corrupted by greed and injustice, witnessing an outrageous oppression of the poor and defenceless members of the community. The prophets read the times from the perspective of Yahweh's purpose in history as known in the older traditions, chiefly the exodus from Egypt and the covenant at Sinai, which unveil his unconditional commitment to act in defence of the poor and oppressed. In this respect the words of B. W. Anderson are fully appropriate:

. . . the prophets were concerned primarily with the people, especially those who were victims of the power structure of society, the "nobodies" whom everybody but the God of Israel had forgotten. A great deal of literature has been preserved from the ancient past which speaks on behalf of kings, aristocracy, or the economically powerful. But the words of the prophets have survived in written form as a unique testimony to concern for the poor, the oppressed, the legally helpless--those whose cries of suffering are heard only by God (cf. Exod. 3:7-9!).⁶

6.2. DENOUNCING THE OPPRESSION OF THE POOR

6.2.1. Amos

The sermon of Amos against foreign city states and nations, recorded in Am 1:3–2:16, was probably preached in the northern sanctuary of Bethel. It is likely to have aroused peoples's attention and applause. However, such a public ovation must have undergone a dramatic change as the name of Israel itself was added to the end of the list of nations against which Yahweh was about to display his wrath (assuming for all good reasons that the word against Israel was deliberately placed at the end). That was unbelievable and sounded like, as people nowadays would say, a terrible heresy. It is all the more impressive that the oracle against Israel (2:6–16) is much lengthier and detailed than the others, giving the clear impression that all the previous oracles are but a preparation for its announcement, which thus becomes the climax of Amos's sermon.

Whilst the other nations (except for Judah) are accused of committing atrocities in war, or war crimes, Israel is accused of committing cruelty within its own community life. "The total war of the others therefore", as Soggin puts it, "does not appear much worse than Israel's own radical injustice".⁷ Israel's social ills are denounced in 2:6–8:

6. For three transgressions of Israel
and for four, I will not turn it⁸ back;
because they sell the innocent for silver,
and the needy for a pair of shoes.
7. They trample⁹, as if it were the dust of the earth,¹⁰
upon the head of the poor,
and turn aside the way of the oppressed;
a man and his father go into the same maiden,
and so they profane my holy name;
8. they lie down beside every altar
on garments taken in pledge;
and in the house of their God they drink
the wine of those who have been fined.

The first accusation against Israel here is not that they were simply selling people in the market, but that the *ṣaddîq* was being sold for silver (i.e. money) and the *'ebyôn* for a mere pair of sandals (though it should be pointed out that Amos is not primarily complaining, as a slave trader would, about the low quotation of the "merchandise"). *ṣaddîq*, as previously seen (see p.), is the just or innocent person (cf. Ex 23:7), a loyal member of the community to whom no blame can be ascribed, or who, in a legal process, is the wronged party, the innocent whose cause ought to win (cf. Dt 25:1). It is parallel here to *'ebyôn*, the poor, needy man (cf. 8:6), and this puts once more in evidence the fact that when the Old Testament refers to the "righteous" (which we prefer to render as "innocent" or "just") as victim of injustice it is virtually talking about the poor and defenceless.

The use of the verb "to sell" (*mākar*, *qānāh* in 8:6) is usually interpreted as pointing to the institution of slavery, suggesting that the innocent poor is sold as slave because he owes some amount of money or even such a little thing as a pair of sandals. Mays might be correct in arguing that the definite article in *hakkeseq*, "the money", indicates that a particular sum as debt is in mind.¹¹ The institution of slavery was not illegal in ancient Israel. However, the Israelite law codes did not institute slavery as such but only sought to control and put limits to it. It was common in the ancient Near East for people to become slaves either by capture in war or because of debts. A classic example of the latter in the Old Testament is the sad story recorded in 2 Kg 4:1-7 of a poor widow who had to sell her two sons because she could not pay her debts.

The phrase "a pair of sandals", parallel to "money", may be indicating a "small debt" (which could have subsequently increased excessively due to

usurious interest) or "a very little (bribe)"¹² (but enough to make corrupt judges to pervert justice), although it could also be taken as an idiom for the legal transfer of land, since in the ancient Near East shoes were used as probative instrument in the transfer of property.¹³ There is no doubt that misappropriation of land was one of the crimes practised by rich Israelites, but it seems less probable that this is the crime alluded in 2:6, for, except for the obscure reference to sandals, the rest to the verse is more clearly pointing to the institution of slavery.

What Amos is inveighing against is not that which was in fact legal, but the blatant misuse of the law by sordid and venal judges who were giving an apparent legal cover to the most heinous crimes against the poor and innocent (cf. 5:10, 12, 15). These, instead of finding help in the courts, were being exploited (in some cases even loosing their land) and reduced to slavery. The case involved a flagrant violation of Ex 23:6: "You shall not pervert the justice due to the poor in his suit". In the light of what we have said, v. 6b could be paraphrased in this way:

because they sell the innocent for (owing) money,
and the needy for (owing as little as) a pair of shoes.

We now come to v. 7a, which refers to those who trample the poor (*dallîm*) in the dust of the earth and turn aside the way of the afflicted or oppressed (*'anāwîm*). Wolff rightly points out that the participial construction here continues the words of accusation begun in 2:6b.¹⁴ The reference still seems to be to the irregular forms in which the courts were operating, as far as the poor are concerned, though under the pretext of justice. In 2:6b the injustice directly denounced is the reduction of the innocent/poor to slavery

by legal/fraudulent means. Now it seems to be the harsh oppression of the poor, in whichever case it may be, that is attacked by the prophet. The *dallîm*, the poor, weak, could own a small piece of inherited land, and therefore they very often fell prey into the hands of the violent and cunning rich. The term *ʿanāwîm*, used here in parallelism with *dallîm*, denotes the "humbled", "afflicted", or "oppressed". These terms represent another two different categories of poor in ancient Israel. A technical, precise difference between them is always difficult to establish and need not be attempted here. To say that they are trampled down and have their way turned aside is a poetic form of saying that they are abused, exploited, wronged, and then preposterously denied justice in the courts. With Wolff¹⁵ we interpret the expression "turn aside the way" as equivalent to "pervert the course of justice" of Pr 17:23 (cf. Pr 18:5 and Is 10:2). This normally takes place when the use of false witnesses and bribery is tolerated (Pr 17:23; Ex 23:7-8), for it ultimately leads to outright partiality in the judicial proceedings.

Another social crime denounced by Amos (v. 7b) is the abuse of maidens. Father and son have sexual relations (that is what "go into" euphemistically means) with the *same* (this word is not in the text but its sense is implied) maid or young woman (*naʿarâ*). The reference to God's "name" here, and to "every altar" and "house of their God" in the following verse may suggest that the maiden in question is a cultic prostitute, an important figure in the Canaanite fertility religion (cf. Ho 4:14), representative of an institution expressly forbidden in Israel (Dt 23:17). However, the usual Hebrew term for sacred prostitute is *qēdēšā*, whereas *naʿarâ* is rather a neutral word. It is also possible that v. 7b is referring "to the violation of the rights of a female bond-servant by making her into a concubine for father and son, prohibited in Ex 21:8".¹⁶ However, the text is not clearly speaking of a female slave (*ʾāmâ*,

Ex 21:7), but of a *na'ârâ*, a young woman, a marriageable girl. Wolff's explanation might seem appropriate:

The only thing that is emphasized as being reprehensible here, . . . is the fact that "a man and his son" consort sexually with "the (same) maiden". In other words the elder, already married, father has intruded upon his son's love affair, and by so doing has turned a young woman into an object for the gratification of forbidden lusts. Thus the clan ethos which Amos affirms guards not only the marital relationship and the legal rights of slaves, but also the very personhood of a young woman, as well as her potential marriageability. It distinguishes at the same time the legal status of the son from that of the father, and in so doing protects the uniqueness of the love relationship.¹⁷

Be it as it may, Amos is clearly attacking a kind of sexual promiscuity (his audience certainly knew what he was talking about) which degraded and dehumanized those involved, especially the exploited young woman. And since our text has primarily to do with the oppression of the poor, it is quite possible that the social status of the young woman is here taken for granted.

In v. 8 Amos denounces the exploitation of debtors by referring to people who lie down on garments taken in pledge and drink the wine of those who have been fined. Whether or not the stich "and so they profane my holy name" in v. 7, with a terminology characteristic of Ezekiel (20:39; 36:20-23) and the Holiness Code (Lv 18:21; 19:12; 20:3; etc.), along with "beside every altar" and "in the house of their God" in v. 8 are later redactional expansions, it is not for us to decide. But even assuming that the references to cult places in v. 8 are original, and not interpretation of Amos on the basis of Hosea (cf. Ho 4:13-14), the context anyway lays emphasis on the use of pledged items and fines.

The use of material acquired by legal process, such as these, was subject to control in Israel's legal tradition. A debtor's garment or cloak was kept by the lender as a surety, as a legal instrument for securing the debt. But the

cloak of the poor man could not be kept as a pledge overnight (Ex 22:25[26]; Dt 24:12-13), and a widow's garment could not be taken at all (Dt 24:17). The element of injustice here is clearly suggested by Amos' reference to "lying down" on garments taken in pledge, implying the preparation of a place in which people shall be spending the night.

Thus the prophet's accusation is against those who blatantly disregard the laws meant to protect the poor and destitute. There are also regulations concerning the matter of fines (cf. Ex 21:22; Dt 22:19), which were meant to make restitutions for damage and not to finance drinking bouts (cf. 6:6) or cultic orgies. Amos is concerned with the legal protection of the oppressed, even when he is technically guilty. However, how "legal" the alluded fines in v. 8 really are, we do not know. Mays' explanation in this regard seems appropriate:

'Wine gained from fines' must refer to a payment in kind exacted from debtors. The line between legality and illegality of these practices would be difficult to draw in a technical sense from the material available. What is certain is that they both involve the suffering of the poor under the power of the rich to use legal process to their own advantage.¹⁸

The text alludes to cultic festivals, but these are not to be necessarily taken as akin to Canaanite religion, since there is no specific indication in this regard. The picture evoked here is that of the rich reclining and feasting in the Israelite sanctuaries on the profits gained from the exploitation and oppression of the poor. And in so doing (as is still very much the case in our modern western society), they saw no contradiction between their religious devotion expressed in the worship of God with feasting and sacrifice and their socioeconomic crimes against the poor.

At the end of Amos' oracle against Israel (vv. 13-16), we have the announcement of God's judgment which will fall upon the rebellious nation, portrayed as an utter military defeat. Those who oppressed the poor shall now be "pressed down" like the chaff which is pressed under the wheels of a heavily loaded wagon (2:13).

In 3:9-11 Amos announces that what the aristocracy of Samaria has done to others will in turn be done to them. The city is full of oppressors, who "do not know what is *right*" (*n°kōhâ*, i.e. what is straightforward, honest, just), "who store up violence and destruction", i.e. the rich oppressors who store up in their treasuries ("strongholds") the profits gained by the use of extortion, bribery, robbery and violence against the poor. This is the "destruction" the prophet is referring to. But in the end judgment will come and the plunderers will be plundered.

In 4:1-3 Amos shows how conscious he is of the connections developed in the process of oppression of the poor by those who partake in the luxury and debauchery of urban affluence in Israel. The indictment is comprised by v. 1:

Hear this word, you cows of Bashan,
 who are in the mountain of Samaria,
 who oppress the poor, who crush the needy,
 who say to their husbands, "Bring, that we may drink!"

This oracle, which may have been announced in the streets or markets of Samaria, was addressed to the bunch of elegant and self-indulgent ladies of the capital, comprising the wives of the court officials, of the wealthy landlords, and of the prosperous merchants. They are exposed by Amos as being the gray power behind their venal husbands. Their insatiable greed and luxury is transformed, via their husbands, into a tyrannical and oppressive

power which crushes the poor and needy. As Mays says, "they make their lords (husbands) the instruments of their own desire, ruling the society of Israel from behind the scenes with sweet petulant nagging for wealth to support their indulgent dalliance".¹⁹

The epithet Amos applies to them, "cows of Bashan", is apparently based in the fact that the region of Bashan, in Transjordan, was well known for its fine cattle (Dt 32:14; Ps 22:12; Ez 39:18), which were well fed and cared for, and accordingly they should have been especially demanding of their herdsman. The feminine elite of Samaria is thus compared with Bashan's prime quality, "spoiled" cattle. They are held responsible, along with their husbands, for the ruthless oppression of the poor which was going on in the land. Therefore, the day of judgment (vv. 2-3), announced as an oath which Yahweh has sworn (cf. 6:8; 8:7), will come upon them.

In several short oracles in ch. 5 Amos stresses again the prevalent corruption in the process of administration of justice in the Israelite courts. His words could have been addressed to the officials of the royal court and the rich and influential citizens of Samaria at large. Very significant are vv. 7, 10-11, where these citizens are accused of turning justice into "wormwood" (a Palestinian plant of exceptionally bitter taste usually employed metaphorically for bitterness of calamity; cf. Jer 9:15; 23:15; Lam 3:15, 19), a figure of speech designed to mean that "the justice administered in the courts had been changed by the alchemy of greed to bitter calamity".²⁰

Furthermore, they are also accused of hating those who speak the truth in court, and of oppressing the poor, small farmer (*dal*), by trampling on or "extorting rent"²¹ from him, and taking from him exactions of wheat (grain-tax). Amos' vitriolic criticism unveils the crude reality that Israel's courts

had become instruments for the oppression of the poor, i.e. they were spreading the disease they were meant to cure. They were no longer courts of justice, but the very seats of injustice. Therefore (and there is always a "therefore" in Amos' oracles), the rich oppressors of the poor will be punished. They will be deprived of their fine properties (lavish homes of hewn stone and luxuriant vineyards) acquired at the expense of the poor.

Verse 12 is another important invective against corruption in the courts:

For I know how many are your transgressions,
and how great are your sins--
you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe,
and turn aside the needy in the gate.

The poor are wronged and exploited in different ways and instead of being granted justice they are "turned aside" in the courts, for their oppressors are easily acquitted through bribery. And among those who make use of the venality of the judges are of course the prosperous businessman, whom Amos accuses of trampling upon the needy and bringing the poor of the land to an end (they were certainly all becoming slaves). In vv. 5-6 Amos quotes the evil intents of their hearts, which are candidly expressed in a monologue form, as if there were nothing wrong in their acts:

Saying, "When will the new moon be over,
that we may sell grain?
And the Sabbath,
that we may offer wheat for sale,
that we may make the ephah small
and the shekel great,
and deal deceitfully with false balances,
that we may buy the poor for silver
and the needy for a pair of sandals,
and sell the refuse of the wheat?"

They cheat in their buying and in their selling, they keep stocks to control the market and raise their prices, and trade in human misery. The poor is put

side by side, in price and dignity, with the refuse of the wheat. And these gentlemen are apparently respectable religious people who keep the cultic festivals and Sabbaths (although, because of their greed, they can hardly wait for them to be over). For Amos the religious system which tolerates or welcomes this type of people is not only useless but also hateful in Yahweh's sight. God's rejection of the religious celebrations of people who cause and/or ignore the agony and the cry of the poor, is incisively expressed in Am 5:21-24, formulated as a Divine saying:

I hate, I despise your feasts,
 and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.
 Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and
 cereal offerings,
 I will not accept them,
 and the peace offerings of your fatted beasts
 I will not look upon.
 Take away from me the noise of your songs;
 to the melody of your harps I will not listen.
 But let justice roll down like waters,
 and righteousness like an everflowing stream.

What God really wants is justice and righteousness (*mišpāt* and *ṣ^o dāqā*) in the courts, in the market places, in all dealings with the poor, the permeating power of which is to flow like the torrents of a mighty, life-giving river. Cultic liturgies and sacrifices offered by people who disregard the covenantal principles of justice, are utterly rejected by God.

The arrogant members of the aristocracy of both Judah and Israel, who lived at ease and confident of themselves, are the object of a "woe" saying in 6:1-7, which we quote, skipping vv. 2-3:

Woe to those who are at ease in Zion,
 and to those who feel secure on the mountain of Samaria,
 the notable men of the first of the nations,
 to whom the house of Israel come!

 Woe to those who lie upon beds of ivory,

and stretch themselves upon their couches,
 and eat lambs from the flock,
 and calves from the midst of the stall;
 who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp,
 and like David invent for themselves instruments
 of music;
 who drink wine in bowls,
 and anoint themselves with the finest oils,
 but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!
 Therefore they shall now be the first of those
 who go into exile,
 and the revelry of those who stretch themselves
 shall pass away.

What the leadership of Samaria is good at is opulent feasting, in luxurious sophistication: expensive furniture, abundance of wine and the choicest meat, indolent ease, the sound of music produced by fine and exclusive instruments, and extravagant indulgence. This splendid way of life of the rich, who got richer, was built upon the misery of the poor, who got poorer. This state of affairs was an outrage in God's sight and the transgressors could not be left unpunished. These reprobate nobles of Israel were doomed to be the first to go into exile. In Auld's words, "those who have been most prominently at ease (v. 1) will be equally prominent in the queue of exiles (v. 7)".²²

6.2.2. Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah

As we know, Hosea was the other prophet contemporaneous to Amos, though of unquestionable northern provenance, who also addressed his message to the northern Israelites. Unlike his colleague Amos, whom he even might have not known, Hosea is primarily involved with the criticism of the cult, from which emerges his social criticism. Conversely, Amos' special emphasis is on social injustice, from which springs his criticism of the cult.

In a note of lamentation found in what Wolff²³ calls a didactic speech (Ho 10:1–8), Hosea speaks of justice (*mišpāṭ*) as having been perverted into poisonous weeds (v. 4). According to this metaphor the mismanagement of the

nation had produced a false justice that killed rather than saved. The situation of the poor, who go to the courts in the hope of being granted justice, is thus compared with that of a farmer, who looks for grain in the field but finds only poisonous weeds.

Hosea's consciousness of the state of social injustice prevalent in Israel is clearly articulated in 12:7-8[8-9]:

A trader, in whose hands are false balances,
he loves to oppress.
Ephraim has said, "Ah, but I am rich,
I have gained wealth for myself";
but all his riches can never offset
the guilt he has incurred.²⁴

Here Ephraim is depicted as a trader standing in the market place with crooked scales avid to exploit and oppress the poor for the sake of profit, as we saw in connection with Amos 8:5. And besides, being still the Jacob of greed and trickery, he tries to justify himself, as if there were no sin in his riches gained by dishonesty and oppression. It is obvious that Hosea is not only saying that the traders of Israel are exploiters and oppressors, but also that their injustice is a symbol of the generalized corruption of the leadership and privileged classes of the nation, to be read behind the name Ephraim. His appeals to such a sinful nation to repent and turn back to Yahweh are centred in two cardinal axles of the Yahwist faith: the practice of justice and covenant loyalty (12:6[7]; 10:12):

So you return to your God;
practice loyalty (*hesed*) and justice (*mišpāt*)
and wait continually for your God.

Sow for yourselves according to justice (*šēdāqâ*),
reap the fruit of loyalty (*hesed*),
break up your fallow ground;
for it is time to seek Yahweh
until he comes and rains justice (*sedeq*) upon you.

As we have plentifully seen, the practice of justice, which is fundamentally manifested in the protection and deliverance of the poor and helpless, is a prominent feature of the covenant tradition. The fact that Hosea here uses both concepts in parallelism bears witness again to their intimate connection. And it was precisely because Israel failed in her loyalty to Yahweh by rejecting her covenant obligations of exclusive allegiance to her God and the practice of justice that the judgment predicted by Amos and Hosea (also Micah) finally took place in 722/21 B.C. (exactly two hundred years after Israel had become an independent nation), when Samaria fell in the hands of the Assyrians and her influential (rich) citizens who had not been slain were made captives and taken into exile.

Micah, the southern prophet of Moresheth, whose ministry extended from perhaps a few years before the fall of Samaria to at least the end of the eighth century B.C., left registered in his speech of 6:1-8 (formally comprising a covenant lawsuit [vv. 1-5] and a Torah liturgy [vv. 6-8]) a short declaration (6:8) of crucial importance synthetizing what God ultimately requires of his people:

He has showed you, O man, what is good;
and what does Yahweh require of you
but to do justice, and to love loyalty,
and to walk humbly before your God?

The context shows that his threefold, supreme requirement of justice, love of loyalty and humble walk with God (very much in accord with Ho 10:12 and 12:6[7]) is presented at the exclusion of all religious formalities. Like his fellow contemporaries Amos (5:21-24) and Isaiah (1:11-17), Micah also espouses the conviction that all religiosity that precludes the practice of justice is futile, standing aside from God's interest.

In his "woe" oracle of 2:1-5 (combined with an announcement of judgment), apparently intended to be a kerygmatic unit, Micah denounces the rich, greedy businessmen who can hardly sleep in the night as they devise cunning schemes to oppress the poor and weak, by seizing their properties by fraudulent means. But the prophet discloses what is going on behind the scenes: Yahweh is also devising evil against them; judgment will come upon them and in the end their properties will be divided among their captors (vv. 3-4).

Micah 3:1-4, a judgment oracle, is a striking libel against the heads of "Jacob" and leaders of "Israel", who in fact are the leaders of Judah:

And I said:
 Hear, you heads of Jacob
 and rulers of the house of Israel!
 Is it not for you to know justice?--
 you who hate the good and love the evil,
 who tear the skin from off my people,
 and their flesh from off their bones;
 who eat the flesh of my people,
 and strip off their skin from them,
 and break their bones in pieces,
 and chop them up like meat²⁵ in a kettle,
 like flesh in a cauldron.
 Then they will cry out to Yahweh,
 but he will not answer them;
 he will hide his face from them at that time,
 according to the wickedness of their deeds.

The members of the government and the officials who functioned as judges in the city gates (or courts), probably paid regional judges (2 Ch 19:4-7), are here accused of behaving like hungry butchers (even cannibals) or wild beasts who feast on abundant and defenceless prey, who happen to be the poor of the land. The metaphors may also be evocative of the fact that the abundant meat they voraciously consume in their frequent and lavish banquets is a symbol of the poor they utterly exploit and oppress.

They are said to hate *good* and love *evil*. As the context plainly suggests these words represent the antithesis *justice/injustice*. As explained by Amos (5:14–15) and Isaiah (1:16b–17), to love or to do good is nothing else but to establish justice in the courts, is to seek justice, to correct oppression, to defend the fatherless and the widow, the powerless in short. However, since the leaders of Israel hate good and love evil, they practice exactly the opposite. As Smith says, "Those who held the reins of political and judicial power in Micah's day had cast aside all pretense for justice and were openly using their power to consume the poor and powerless".²⁶ But as is usual in the presentation of this type of oracle, punishment is also announced: Like the poor who cry in their hands, they shall also cry when their judgment come, but they shall not be heard. Because of the seriousness of their injustice, the mercilessness of their hearts, they shall be abandoned by Yahweh in their hour of affliction.

The same group of people is addressed in the pericope of 3:9–12, which is an oracle of judgment very similar to 3:1–4, although now encompassing all aspects of Judah's government. The good that they hate and the evil that they love are here clarified: they hate *justice* and (love to) pervert all equity (v. 9). Violence, perversity, and bribes were elements well akin to their customary behaviour. They "embarked on expansionary building programmes, but they built "with blood" (v. 10), their funds and labour extorted from the poor and weak".²⁷ Even among priests and prophets, possessed by greed, injustice was rampant. They did their work for money, they sold their services to wealthy clients and ignored the poor. And yet they leaned upon false religious assurance and hypocrisy. The result is that what was unbelievable, what was unheard of would come to pass: Jerusalem, yes, Jerusalem, the former seat of justice, but now the very lair of injustice, would be destroyed, would become a heap of ruins, just like Samaria before her (1:6).

Other significant texts in Micah are the oracle of 6:9-16, where the ruling council of the people is accused of committing the same injustices that Amos denounced in Samaria (the storing up of ill-gotten riches, deceitful scales, small measures, exorbitant prices, violence of the rich, lies and deceit at large), and 7:1-7, apparently a lament in which Micah bemoans the fact that no righteous can be found, and regrets the generalized situation of violence and oppression, particularly the immoral attitude of the princes and judges who do not even wait to be offered a bribe in order to pervert justice, since they themselves unashamedly ask for it!

Now we turn briefly to Isaiah, the son of Amoz, whose intermittent prophetic activity was carried out in Jerusalem from ca. 742 B.C. to the end of the century. At the end of his speech in 1:10-17, which bears the form of a sacrifice Torah, he makes a vehement appeal to the leaders of Judah and the common people assembled in the inner courtyard of the temple for a sacrificial festival:²⁸

.....
 cease to do evil,
 learn to do good;
 seek justice,
 correct oppression;
 defend the fatherless,
 plead for the widow.
 (1:16c-17)

As we have already indicated, along with Amos and Micah, Isaiah also employs the antithesis evil/good, and explicitly tells the people the kind of good God is expecting from them. But what is said to prevail in Jerusalem is not good (justice to the poor and oppressed), but evil, as attested a little further in vv. 21-23, a harsh rebuke directed against its political leaders and officials:

Ah, how the faithful city
 has become a harlot,
 she that was full of justice!
 Righteousness lodged in her,
 but now murderers.
 Your silver has become dross,
 your wine mixed with water.
 Your princes are rebels
 and companions of thieves.
 Every one loves a bribe
 and runs after gifts.
 They do not defend the fatherless,
 and the widow's cause does not come to them.

The princes (*sārîm*) "were not necessarily men of royal descent, although these were certainly included, but men of authority who held high civil and military administrative posts".²⁹ They are rebels for not complying with God's covenant laws, particularly for not keeping a just order in society. They are corrupt and only think in profit, and make use of their public position of power for making easy fortune, leaving evident their lack of concern for the sufferings and misery of the poor.

In 3:13-15, a speech in the form of a lawsuit, addressed to the same circle of officials, to whom the elders are now added, the theme of abuse of power is again put forward. Their misdeeds are openly denounced. They oppress the poor by means of extortion and abuse of the laws of debt (v. 14; cf. v. 12 as translated by NEB: "money-lenders strip my people bare, and usurers lord it over them"). Thus they "crush" and "grind" the face of the poor (v. 15). What they have stored in their homes is "the spoil of the poor". The vineyard that they devour (like wild animals) is a metaphor of Israel, which is very expressively developed in the beautiful poem of 5:1-7, the climax of which (v. 7) displays an exquisite play on words which conveys God's deep disappointment:

For the vineyard of Yahweh of hosts

is the house of Israel,
 and the men of Judah
 are his pleasant planting;
 and he looked for justice (*mišpāt*),
 but behold, bloodshed (*mišpāh*);
 for righteousness (*š° dāqā*),
 but behold, a cry (*š°^a qā*).

This is another development of the antithesis good/evil. Justice is the ultimate good that Yahweh looked for among his people, his vineyard, for whom he had so kindly cared since the days of their liberation from the Egyptian bondage. But instead of the sweet fruit of justice, he finds out that his vineyard is full of bitter, wild grapes, i.e. the violence of the powerful against the weak and the resulting cry of pain and agony of those who are pitilessly crushed.

Still in ch. 5 we have a series of woe oracles, the first of them being (vv. 8–10) directed against the rich land-grabbers, who "join house to house" and "field to field", obviously by oppressing and exploiting the poor with the help of a corrupt judicial institution, represented by officials "who acquit the guilty for a bribe, and deprive the innocent of his right!" (5:23). But as usual, it is said that their actions will not be left unpunished. They are warned of the dire judgment that will overcome them.

The woe oracle of 10:1–4a offers a short but sharp description of the prevalent state of affairs in Judah and Jerusalem under their unscrupulous leadership, laying bare the basis of the corruption of the legal system:

Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees,
 and the writers who keep writing oppression,
 to turn aside the weak from justice
 and to rob the poor of my people of their right,
 so that widows may be their spoil,
 and they may make the fatherless their prey!
 What will you do in the day of punishment,
 in the storm that will come from afar?

To whom will you flee for help,
 and where will you leave your wealth?
 Nothing remains but to crouch among the prisoners
 or fall among the slain.

The decrees (*hōq*) here referred to seem to be rulings passed, or determined, by a legislative body formed from the upper classes of Jerusalem (probably associated with the royal court and acting in the name of the king), who used their legislative power to their own advantage and to that of the other members of the Judahite aristocracy. They are accused of twisting the legal claims of the weak (*dallîm*), or poor, small farmers, and the widows and the fatherless, "who had to seek an advocate for their claims at law because as women and minors they had no rights of their own".³⁰ However, in the coming day of Divine visitation or punishment (to be carried out by the Assyrians, the "rod of Yahweh") they will not be able to keep their ill-gotten wealth and, if not found among the slain, they will crouch in humiliation among the captives, who then will be transported and certainly be sold as slaves.

CONCLUSION

The denunciation of the injustices practised by the rich and powerful against the poor and weak (as a norm followed by a threat of judgment) is clearly a very prominent feature of the message of the eighth century prophets, but by no means confined to their bold speeches. The concern with the care and protection due to the powerless and the place of prominence of such an element in the Israelite faith can be also attested in the records ascribed to prophets of other times as well (cf., for instance, Jer 2:34; 5:26-29; 7:5-7; 22:3-5; 22:13-17; Ez 16:49; 18:10-18; 22:6-12; 22:25-29; Is 58:3-9; Zec 7:8-10; Mal 3:5; perhaps Da 4:27 should also be mentioned here), despite the fact that in later times (during and after the Babylonian exile) the biblical

language of poverty acquired a religious connotation which remained alongside its original meaning connected with economic deprivation.³¹

However, there is no need here for further examination of the relevant prophetic material to substantiate the assertion that the prophets, particularly during the eighth century B.C., both in Israel and Judah, were deeply committed to the cause of the poor (for so was Yahweh their God), eloquently voicing their cry and boldly announcing God's coming judgment on their exploiters and oppressors (which effectively came to pass during the fall of Samaria in 721 B.C., the devastation of Judah and siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrians in 701 B.C., and the final fall of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians in 597 B.C.), and also raising the practice of justice (as protection and liberation of the poor) to a position where it becomes the touchstone of the true and acceptable expression of religious worship.

It can also be said that they were truly the voice of Yahweh in response to the cry of the poor and afflicted of their times. This certainly meant a kind of hope for the poor, perhaps a dim one in those days, but still hope. In this connection, it seems appropriate to recall the fact that during the times of the promised disaster (or God's judgment) the poor were left apparently unharmed in the land (and the restrictions imposed on the land by their conquerors were certainly not comparable with their previous state of oppression and misery in the hands of their own rich fellow countrymen), whereas their eminent oppressors were either slaughtered or taken captive by the Assyrians and Babylonians.

There is also another important aspect of hope here linked with the very preservation of the prophetic texts. Every time their fiery words are read down the centuries, by men and women of different races and nationalities, the

prophetic message resurges in its challenging power, confronting and lighting up their conscience and summoning them to engage themselves in the historical struggle for the poor in the name of God, who is not ashamed to call them "his" people.

Another point that we should stress in connection with the prophetic message is the fact that the practice of justice for the poor and weak is also the standard by which the historical continuity of a given sociopolitical entity (city, nation, etc.) is measured. Any sociopolitical entity or system supported by the socioeconomic oppression and exploitation of the poor and weak is bound, sooner or later, to crumble and fall. In this respect the poetic image of judgment found in Isaiah's parable of the vineyard (5:5-6) is very appropriate.

The connections that can be easily traced between the message of the prophets regarding the social ills of their times which they bravely denounce and the situations of injustice that are prevalent in our modern society, though perpetrated through new, sophisticated mechanisms of oppression, are, in spite of the huge gap in time and space that separates our two worlds, simply astonishing. Especially those of us who live in countries where the gulf between the poor and the rich is not only very prominent but also steadily growing to abysmal proportions, find in the social criticism of the prophets the echo of a number of current, familiar situations involving injustice, and are usually well open to hear their message with a profound interest and real empathy.

CHAPTER 7

THE COMING KINGDOM OF JUSTICE: A STUDY OF ISAIAH 11:1-9

We have so far touched upon only the first aspect of the message of the prophets in relation to the cry and hope of the poor. A great many of the prophetic sayings, in particular those from the exilic and postexilic times, are ready to acknowledge the fact that despite the coming (or already consummated) tragedy there is still a future for God's people. They can envisage beyond the stormy clouds of judgment a bright time in the future when lasting justice and righteousness will be established.

One example is Is 1:24-31, where a time of judgment is announced, but one which will be a purging and refining process. The city which had become a harlot, full of injustice, afterward "shall be called the city of justice (*ṣedeq*), the faithful city". Is 28:14-22 also points to the same fact. As Isaiah preaches against the rulers of Jerusalem, engaged in political plots which would inevitably conduct the nation to a serious disaster, he announces the future rebuilding of Zion on the basis of justice and righteousness: "And I will make justice the line, and righteousness the plummet" (v. 17). Other passages that put the subject in future perspective can be found in Is 9:6-7; 11:1-9; 16:4-5; 24:21-23; 25:1-5; 29:19-21; 32:1-8; 32:15-18; 33:5-6; 41:17-20; 49:24-26; 61:1-4; 51:4-6; 65:21-25; Amos 9:11-15; Mi 4:1-4; 5:2-4; Ez 34:17-31. In several cases the lot of the poor is not explicitly referred to, but nonetheless it is to be implied both by the context and on the basis of the comparison of texts bearing the same features and motifs.

Without doubt, among all these passages the most eloquent prophetic testimonies to a future hope for the poor are those which speak about a coming ideal king, the Anointed One of Yahweh, also known as the Messiah in the Aramaic form. Addressing Judah during the troubled times of the Syro-Ephraimite war, Isaiah depicts the future advent of a new administration in the Davidic government under which peace, justice and righteousness will become a full and lasting reality (9:7). Is 11:1-9 is, however, the prophetic passage which more fully describes that time in the future when the poor shall experience fulness of peace and joy, freed from all chains of exploitation and oppression by the wicked--the rich and powerful--which they have had to bear through the unfolding of history. The detailed study of this passage is the object of the this last chapter.

7.1. TEXTUAL AND CRITICAL CONCERNS

7.1.1. The Text of Isaiah 11:1-9 in Translation

1. And there shall come forth a shoot from the stump of
Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit;^a
2. and there shall rest upon him the Spirit of Yahweh,
the Spirit of wisdom and of discernment,
the Spirit of counsel and of might,
the Spirit of knowledge and of fear of Yahweh.^a
3. And his delight shall be in the fear of Yahweh.^a
and^b he shall not judge by what his eyes see,
nor decide by what his ears hear;
4. but he will judge the poor with justice,
and decide with equity for the oppressed^a of the
earth;
he will smite the oppressor^b with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he will kill the
wicked.
5. And justice^a will be the belt^b of his waist,
and faithfulness^a the girdle^b of his loins.

6. Then the wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the kid;
The calf and the lion cub shall feed^a together,
and a little child shall lead them.
7. The cow and the bear shall (jointly) graze,^a
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
8. The suckling shall play over the hole of the cobra,
and upon the den^a of the viper shall the weaned child
put his hands.^b
9. They shall not harm or destroy in all my holy mountain,
for the earth shall be full^a of the knowledge of
Yahweh
as the waters cover the sea.

7.1.2. Textual and Explanatory Notes

1.a "Shall bear fruit" is translation of MT *yipreh*. The reading of the ancient Versions (LXX, Sym, Th, Ar, Tg, Vg), *yiprah*, "shall spring forth", makes a perfect parallel with *w^eyāsā'* in the first stich, and might have been the original reading, as have been pointed out by Wildberger¹ and others.

2.a The name of God, Yahweh, at the end of 2d makes this stich longer than its predecessor, and there is no allusion to it in the LXX, which has the term εὐσεβείας for MT *yir'at yhw^h*.² Its presence could be connected with the possible origin of stich 3a as suggested in the following note.

3.a Stich 3a stands by itself in the poem. It seems that its corresponding parallel line is missing. There are critics who suggest that it could be a corrupt dittography of the precedent stich, *rū^ah (da'at) w^eyir'at yhw^h*, or even a variant reading of it which has come into the text. Therefore Scott³ and Clements⁴ state that it should be omitted, which in fact is done, for example, by Gray,⁵ Otto Kaiser,⁶ and NEB.

3.b Contrary to MT which starts 3b with a conjunction (*w^e*), many MSS and the major ancient Versions (LXX, Sym, Tg, Vg) show no trace of it. It could have been part of the suggested variant reading which supposedly gave origin to stich 3a.

4.a Here MT '*anwê*, "poor, humble", is usually emended to '*āniyyê*, "poor, oppressed", in the light of its parallelism with *dallîm*, "poor, weak" (which in 10:2 is parallel to '*āniyyê ammî*, "the oppressed of my people"), and the reading of Sym, πτωχοῦς, "poor, beggar".

4.b MT has "he will smite the earth", but a better sense and perfect parallelism with *rāšā*, "wicked", in stich 4d is obtained when '*āriš*, "oppressor, ruthless", is read instead of '*ereš*, as JB and NEB effectively do. Besides, it is worth noting that '*āriš* is parallel to *rāšā* in Job 15:20 and 27:3; in Ps 37:35 it is used adjectively with *rāšā*; in Jer 15:21 it is parallel to *rā'îm*, "the wicked". Furthermore, the presence of "earth" both in 4c and at the end of 4b results in a disturbing contrast.

5.a MT does not read a definite article before *šedeq*, "justice", as it does before '*mûnâ*, "faithfulness". Therefore, Wildberger,⁷ followed by Clements,⁸ suggests that the article should be deleted for the sake of uniformity, whereas the proposal of BHS is that an article be added to *šedeq*. So does also Driver⁹ citing König. For Davidson,¹⁰ the presence of the article in "faithfulness" is due to the fact that this term denotes a well known moral quality, thus belonging to a category of words which normally receives the article. The proposal of BHS seems more appropriate because the omission of *h* before *šedeq* is easier to explain textually than its addition to '*mûnâ*, since the previous word (*hyh*) ends with *h*. Thus the article could have been omitted by haplography. Nevertheless, if left as it is, verse 5 displays a better balance in the number of

syllables of the distich, and even the number of consonants is identical. The possibility for an intentional omission of the article should not be ruled out.

5.b The repetition of 'ēzôr, "girdle", in a distich, when two synonymous (or somehow related) words are normally expected, seems stylistically inconvenient. Since Vg employs two words of similar sound (*cingulum* and *cinctorium*), and all the other ancient Versions (except Sym) also use two different words, it is quite possible that the Hebrew text originally had two synonymous words with close morphological and/or phonetical resemblance. As suggested by Driver¹¹ and BHS, the word used along with 'ēzôr could have been 'ēsûr, "bond, band", with the meaning of "girdle", as the Syriac 'esār. Another emendation, perhaps less preferable, proposes the use of ḥ^agôr, "belt, girdle" (so Gray and Wade).¹²

6.a Following the pattern set by the preceding stichs, we would expect the naming of two animals here instead of three, along with a verb which is missing in MT. LXX inserts καὶ ταῦρος, "and (the) bull", between the calf and the lion, but significantly ends with a verb, ἅμα βοσκηθήσονται, "will graze together". So in order to improve the symmetry of the second distich, at least three verbal forms have been suggested in substitution to MT ûm^eri', "fatling": yabrî', "shall be fattened"; yir'û, "shall graze"; and yimr^e'û, "shall feed", which is graphically closer to ûm^eri' and therefore makes up a better conjecture. Scott thinks that wmry' may represent mēre'îm, "friends" ("the calf and the lion cub shall be friends together"),¹³ but yimr^e'û, also supported by 1QIsa^a, seems still preferable.

7.a MT reads tir'ênâ, "shall feed", which for some scholars would imply the removal of yahdāw, "together", from the second to the first stich, breaking the symmetry between the lines 7a and 7b, and affecting the meaning of 7b to

which *yahdāw* is indispensable. The emendation usually proposed is *titrā'ênâ*, "shall be friends", or "shall be companions to one another" (cf. Pr 22:24), on the assumption that one *t* has accidentally dropped out from *ttr'ynh* in the process of the transmission of the text. However, it would seem more plausible to render *tir'ênâ* intransitively as "shall graze", with the sense of "together" implied by the context and also justified by the so-called "double duty" principle, according to which we can assume that the presence of the adverb *yahdāw* in one stich makes up for its absence in the other. Moreover the idea of the bear "grazing" is exactly paralleled by the lion eating straw.

8.a The literal meaning of *m^o'ûrâ* (MT) is "place of light" or "light-hole". 1QIsa^a has the word in the plural, *m'wrwt*), and in one MSS it is in the part. fem. sing., *m'yrt*. However, with the ancient Versions (LXX: τρωγλη or κοιτη [Cod. Alex.]; Tg: *hur*; Syr: *hôrâ*; OL: *cubile*; Vg: *caverna*) most critics and modern versions prefer the emendation *m^o'ârâ*, "cave", or *m^o'ônâ*, "den, lair, dwelling". One proposition has been made by F. Perles according to which, as he claimed, no emendation would be necessary. He takes *mē'ûrâ* in the sense of the akkadian *mûru*, "offspring".¹⁴ But in so doing he destroys the parallelism which is certain to exist between *m^o'ûrâ* (as such or in whatever emended form) and *hur*, "hole", in the first stich. The fact is that *m^o'ûrâ* is here employed in such a context that "hole" is unquestionably the translation that suits it best. However, since the Hebrew uses two different words for "hole", it is preferable to represent this fact in the translation by resorting to an English synonymous word.

8.b The phrase *yadô hadâ*, which we translate "shall put his hand", presents some problems: a) as two separate words it makes the line too long; b) the syntactical elements at the end of 8b depart from the normal Hebrew word

order; c) the root *hdh*, although frequent in Arabic and Syriac, meaning "to lead, direct", is unknown in Hebrew, except for the possibility of being found in the proper names *yhdy* and *dhy*. For Gray *ytdhdh*, "shall strip about", could be the single verbal form (imperf.) parallel to *wš'š'* and presumably concealed by *ydw hhdh*, which in this case is taken for an early error.¹⁵ J. Reider, however, proposed *y^edahdeh*, the meaning of which, derived from the Arabic *dahdah*, would be "throw or roll stones", or perhaps "play pebbles".¹⁶ What seems cogent is the idea that there lies behind *ydw hhdh* an original verbal form parallel to *š'š'*, close to it in form and presumably also meaning "to play". Such a verbal form could quite possibly be that proposed by Reider.

9.a MT has *ml'h*, while a text from Q bears *tml'h*, a kind of combination of perfect and imperfect. Would this indicate that the form is to be preserved, while it should be read in the imperfect and translated in the future ("shall be full")? This question is raised by Wildberger.¹⁷ If it is so, this could also imply that the correspondent lines to 9bc in Hab 2:14, which has *tml'*, are not of an earlier date, as sometimes presumed (so Kaiser). However, it is also possible that the Q conflate reading *tml'h* is simply due to a scribal error, and so the question as to which text precedes which could not be clarified on this basis. At any rate they both deal with ancient expressions which belong to the Kingship and Zion rhetoric.

7.1.3. Critical and Literary Remarks

One of the questions usually raised in regard to Is 11:1-9 has to do with the limits of the text as a unit, and its relation to its immediate and larger context in the book. The difficulty in giving an appropriate answer to this question is clearly seen in the wide disparity of opinions issued by critical scholars in this respect.

Since the *waw* at the beginning of v. 1 points to a connection between 11:1ff and the preceding text, which refers to the advance of the Assyrian troops and ends with an obscure reference to the cutting of trees (it is not clear whether it refers to the Assyrians or the royal house and nobles of Jerusalem), there are scholars who place the beginning of the pericope somewhere in ch. 10. For Herder, followed by Bruno and Kaiser, 10:33f should be separated from the previous section and connected to ch. 11.¹⁸ Kissane inserts 10:17-23 (except for 18bc) after 10:34 and then regards 10:27d-11:14 as a unit,¹⁹ in view of which he is criticized by Wildberger, for whom this would involve a mixture of what he calls isaianic and post-isaianic material. Barth regards 10:27b-32 as a bridge text, which is linked to the messianic prophecy by vv. 33b and 34 (from which 33a is questionably separated from 33b and connected to 11:1).²⁰ More recently Klaus Koch has taken the messianic passage as straightly comprising 10:27b-11:9.²¹

There is no doubt that a connection can be established between the contents of 11:1 and the preceding verses, but as Wildberger has observed ch. 10 is not ready for the theme of the flourishing of a new sprout of David, which is introduced by ch. 11. Whereas the possibility of an original connection should not be ruled out altogether, it is very likely, however, that they are originally independent units brought together because of their thematic affinity. They both have one and the same or a similar type of tragedy as their point of reference. But it is easy to note that their perspective is different. Whereas the first one ends with the prediction of a tragedy, the other one starts by taking such or a similar tragedy for granted and looking beyond it. No matter how close they could have been to each other regarding the time of their enunciation, both oracles are still likely to be independent units. The placing of them together and the presence of a

connecting *w* could have easily been the result of the editorial work at an early stage of the extremely complex process of formation of the book.

At all events it seems plausible to admit that in 11:1 we have the beginning of a new section consisting of a poem that extends through v. 9. Verses 6–9 could have been based on an independent tradition built upon ancient, popular ideas, but here they are an integral part of the poem. The fact that the same motif appears in Is 65:25 does not necessarily mean that our poem comes from post-exilic times and should therefore have been more properly placed in the last major collection of the book. Both texts may be drawing from the same popular tradition, which must have been linked with the Zion ideology, and if there is any direct relation between both passages, it is Is 65:25 which looks suspiciously like a free, random quotation (and it is an acknowledged fact that earlier isaianic motifs are sometimes recurrently used by later representatives of this prophetic tradition). One cannot easily overlook the fact that Isaiah was not only a prophet of doom, but quite conspicuously also of hope, and it is not without reason that most critical scholars ascribe 11:1–9 to Isaiah himself.

The phrase *gēza' yišāy*, "stump (or stock) of Jesse)", provides the basis for the traditional assumption that at the time of the composition of the poem the Davidic dynasty had been deposed from the throne of Judah altogether. This could perhaps be true, but the use of "stump" by itself, however, does not necessarily give clear indication of it. The image of "stump" can as well be applied to Hezekiah and his pitiful, insignificant kingdom after Judah was overrun by Sennacherib and virtually reduced to the royal city of Jerusalem. Besides, it should also be pointed out that "stump" is not the only possible translation for *gēza'*. Furthermore, there is also the possibility that in the same

way in which the oracle of ch. 10 is predicting the "cutting down" of the trees, 11:1 is referring to "the stump of Jesse" as the assumed result of an inevitable disaster which is still due to come.

Just as the oracle in 9:2-6[9:1-6] looks to the future after the troubles brought about by the Syro-Ephraimite war (especially for the tribal area of Naphthali and Zebulon), in the time of Ahaz, assuring that misfortune will not be permanent, so 11:1-9 looks beyond a consummated (or still to come) catastrophe, which could well have been that of 701 B.C., bearing the announcement of a future, ideal king from the house of David. The idea of future salvation after disaster introduced by 11:1-9 is further developed by vv. 10-16 and closed by the two short songs of thanksgiving of ch. 12, consisting of material which both bear the marks of later editorial activity and neatly closes the bulk of chapters 1-12, believed to have been at some time one of the independent collections of the isaianic corpus.

A close relation of the contents of our poem with Mi 5:2-4 and Ps 72 is clearly established, but it is unlikely that there has been any direct dependence between any two of them. They all seem to be the expression of a long existing type, based on an older historical tradition belonging to the time of the monarchy. It is possible that such a motif was linked with an annual royal festival in Jerusalem, which would have included the ceremony of the enthronement of the Prince and its subsequent yearly renewal or similar act of dedication, but this should not be pressed, for a passage can belong to a long known genre without the genre being tied down to any particular festival.

Ps. 72, which we have already studied, is the text which bears more similarity with Is 11:1-9. However, while the former is a prayer for the ruling king, the latter is an oracle regarding a future ruler. Similar oracles referring

to a future ruler whose coming would bring a time of justice and peace are also found in Israel's milieu.²² Such oracles were certainly heard in the cult and royal courts, and there is reason to believe that they were also uttered in Jerusalem. It seems likely that Is 11:1-9 was composed according to this form to convey its message of hope, so that it could be better understood by those who heard it at first hand.

Whether or not the poem had originally a regular strophic structure and metre cannot be clearly ascertained, and at any event it seems virtually impossible to restore it to a supposedly original symmetry. Only partial attempts in this regard could produce reasonable results. Gray, who regards 11:3a as a dittograph and 6d as intrusive, suggests that the original poem ended with v. 8, and that it could have consisted of 24 lines (three strophes of four distichs each), of which the opening distich would have been lost. Whether 6d is intrusive we cannot confirm, but Gray's rearrangement of vv. 6-7 by placing 7c before 6c seems quite reasonable:

6a Then the wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
 6b and the leopard shall lie down with the kid;
 7c the lion shall eat straw like the ox,
 6c and the calf and the lion cub shall feed together.
 6d (And a little child shall lead them)

7a The cow and the bear shall be friends,
 7b their young shall lie down together.

Lines 7c and 6c seem to belong to each other, both in their internal parallelistic structure and in their context. The pair "lion--ox" is perfectly matched by "calf--lion cub". Parallelism between *'aryēh*, "lion", and *k^opîr*, "lion cub or young lion", is attested for instance in Ps 17:12; Am 3:4 and Mi 5:5[8]. Comparing 7c6c with 7ab we notice that both distichs share a common structure: the first line describes the association of two adult animals (one

domestic and the other wild, as also in 6ab) while the second one depicts their respective young sharing a similar peaceful association. With this simple arrangement the description of the animals (vv. 6-8) appears in a fairly regular display (we have four pairs of lines in parallelistic array) only disturbed by 6d and the length of 8b. Stich 6d could perhaps find a more suitable place just before v. 8, where it would conclude the reference to the grazing animals (which are all then lead by the little shepherd) and introduce v. 8, which alludes to small children who harmlessly play over the hole of serpents. As for the length of 8b, we have already dealt with this issue under textual note 8.b (see p. 341).

Notwithstanding the advantages attained with the arrangement above suggested, in fact no certainty exists as to its correspondence with a presumable original form of the poem. As it has come to us, the poem (including v. 9) consists of twenty-eight stichs of which two (3a and 6d) seem isolated in the text, while the other twenty-six, with the joining of 7c with 6a, form thirteen regular distichs. The metrical scansion can be thus summarized: $4+4$: 3bc, 4cd, 8; $4+3$: 1, 2ab, 5, 9ab, 9cd; $3+3$: 6ab, 7ab; $3+4$: 4ab; $3+3$: 6ab, 7ab; $3+4+3$: 2cd3a; $4+4+4$: 7c6cd. It is interesting to observe that the metre as above proposed can provide a regular rhythm for the whole poem which can be displayed as follows:

	3 + 4 (+ 3)		3 + 3	
4 + 3	4 + 4		4 + 4 (+ 4)	4 + 3
		4 + 3		
4 + 3	3 + 4		3 + 3	4 + 3
	4 + 4		4 + 4	

A perfect rhythmical balance is observed, maintained mostly by the symmetric use of 4 + 4 distichs, and the alternate use of 4 + 4 with 3 + 4 and

3 + 3 in the first and second larger columns respectively, with v. 5 (which emphasizes the king's character of justice) serving as the gravitational point of the rhythmical structure of the poem.²³

Apart from the rhythmical chiasmus (4 + 3 / 3 + 4) in v. 2, syntactical chiasmi occur in four distichs symmetrically displayed: 1ab--4bc / 6ab--9bc, leaving again 5ab as the link between the two sections comprised by those four distichs. Comparing 3bc with 4ab, we notice that the same verbs are used in both distichs in a chiastic and antithetical fashion: ". . . not judge / . . . not decide; but judge . . . / and decide . . ." The inversion is observed in the position of the verbs in both distichs, at the end of 3bc and at the beginning of 4ab.

As we consider the natural divisions of the text in regard to the development of its subject matter the following outline can be obtained:

THE KINGDOM OF JUSTICE AND PEACE

- A. THE KING OF JUSTICE (vv. 1-5)
 - His royal roots (v. 1)
 - His divine endowments (v. 2)
 - His character and ruling project (vv. 3-5)
- B. THE KINGDOM OF PEACE (vv. 6-9)
 - Transformation in the realm of Nature (vv. 6-8)
 - Universal peace and its foundation (v.9)

7.2. THE JUST KING AND HIS REIGN OF PEACE

7.2.1. The King's Profile

Verses 1-5 are closely related to 9:6-7[5-6]. While ch. 9 predicts the birth of a royal child, ch. 11 talks about a shoot from the stump or stock of Jesse. Undoubtedly both texts refer to the same future figure whose attributes and

functions correspond in the texts. More precisely the person referred to is an ideal Davidic ruler who, endowed with the Spirit of Yahweh, will establish justice and peace on earth. The author is not totally discouraged by the present plight of the Davidic dynasty. Moved by a spirit of hope he foresees a new beginning, a time when the old promise of salvation concerning the house of David will take place. The immediate implication of such a prophecy is the affirmation of an implied dissatisfaction with the current rulers of Judah, and the denunciation of their rebellion against Yahweh and their oppression of the people, in other words, the affirmation of their inadequacy for the position they are in since they do not comply with their fundamental duties, they do not live up to God's expectations. On the assumption that this prophecy was probably uttered between 713 and 711 B.C., when the Philistine city of Ashdod tried to rebel against Assyria with the hesitant support of Judah, Koch expresses the same understanding in one of his valuable comments about the messianic expectation:

Behind this expectation lies a massive *criticism of the king* -- criticism not merely of the ruler's practice, but even of court ideology as such. What Nathan's prophecy (II Sam. 7) and the royal psalms had to say about the transference of divine forces to the royal office (Ps. 72) had either not been implemented in Israel or had borne no lasting fruit. At all events, if Isaiah's antagonist Ahaz was supposed to have received *rû^ah* at his anointing, according to the account in ch. 7 he had no longer retained anything of its effect.²⁴

Irrespective of the precise time in the pre-exilic period when this and other similar prophecies were first announced, they all put in evidence the contrast between the failure of current rulers and the integrity of the future Anointed One of Yahweh in whose days justice and peace shall flourish, and who in fact is not presented as just as an ideal figure, but also as the real embodiment of the qualities expected from any Israelite king, or any other ruler.

As 10:18 shows, the great and lofty forest of Assyria would be cut down and utterly destroyed. In contrast, as seen in 11:1, there would be hope for David's house, which was in fact reduced to a simple stump or rootstock by the Assyrians. The term *gēza'* is used here and in two other places in the Old Testament. In Job 14:8, where hope for a tree, which can recover even if cut down, is contrasted with no hope for "man" (this metaphor could perhaps have been in mind here), it means "stump", but in Is 40:24 it denotes "stem" or "trunk". If we apply both senses to 11:1 in reference to the unfortunate events of 701 B.C., the image conveyed can be either that of a live tree (Hezekiah and Jerusalem), the only one still standing after the Assyrian invasion, or that of a stump of a fallen or cut down tree (what had been left of the Davidic kingdom by the Assyrians). Since David's father, Jesse, is mentioned, a genealogical imagery could also be assumed, in particular when the term *gēza'* is rendered as "stock" (so NEB and JB),²⁵ and so an allusion to the royal house of David seems here implied. From it a new shoot or branch will come forth and bear fruit, i.e., a new "son of David", a new king from David's lineage who will come and bring with him a new age of justice and integral peace.²⁶ But the reference to the "stump of Jesse" can be also understood from a slightly different perspective, which can be corroborated by the imagery of Job 14:7-9:

For there is hope for a tree,
 if it be cut down, that it will sprout again,
 and that its shoots will not cease.
 Though its root grow old in the earth,
 and its stump die in the ground,
 yet at the scent of water it will bud
 and put forth branches like a young plant.

Since David himself is not mentioned, but "Jesse", the original trunk from which the shoot of the Davidic dynasty came forth, it is possible that Jesse is here seen as a dead stump on the ground (like in Job's metaphor) which is

still able to bud and put forth branches, and from whom a new offshoot will effectively spring forth, which is still "Davidic", but an alternative one, as if to say that the first one has failed and therefore has been rejected by God. The idea finds a suitable parallel in the record of God's proposal to Moses, according to which he would destroy the stubborn and rebellious Israelites in the desert and make of him, Moses, a new people (Nu 14:11-12).

The idea of royalty is present in v. 1 not only because of the reference to Jesse. The word *hōter* (used here and in Pr 14:3), besides meaning "branch, twig, rod", can also be rendered as "sceptre".²⁷ Hence the poem is undoubtedly dealing with a royal, genealogical imagery. In passages like Jr 23:5; Zec 3:8; 6:12 the coming king of the future is clearly understood as a branch from his family tree.

Whether *yprh* is to be read *yipreh* ("shall bear fruit") with MT, or *yiprah* ("shall spring forth") with the ancient Versions (forming in this case a better parallelism with *yāsā*), is not easy for one to decide, although the second option seems more plausible. In this case the distich of v. 1 looks more regular and uniform. The reading "shall bear fruit" may have further implications. The fruitfulness of the branch (*nēser*) can be interpreted as an allusion to the king's overall prosperity, and in particular to his embodiment of all the ideals set for the Davidic dynasty. Basically fruits of (the Spirit of) justice is what might be here implied, as suggested in vv. 2-5.²⁸

Verse 2 gives a brief description of the king's special endowment. Upon him rests the Spirit of Yahweh, the Divine source of the gifts with which he is equipped. The notion that Yahweh always endows with his Spirit those among his people whom he chooses for a special task is part of an ancient tradition. In Ex 31:2ff and 35:10ff it is said that Bezalel was "filled with the Spirit of God,

with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship" to work in the building of the Tabernacle. According to the narrative of Nu 11:24-26, the Spirit of God rested upon the seventy elders who had been chosen to share with Moses the leadership of the people, and they prophesied that day. Also the heroic deeds of the Judges in their wars and skirmishes of liberation (and even Samson's extraordinary physical strength) were all meant to be the result of the endowment of the Spirit of God (cf. Ju 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14). Having been anointed king, Saul prophesied and was "turned into another man", as the Spirit of God "came mightily upon him" (1 Sa 10:6, 10; 11:6). Likewise, the Spirit of Yahweh "came mightily upon David", as he was anointed by Samuel (1 Sa 16:13). The anointing ritual was supposed to point to an ideal and a reality beyond itself. It is over against this background that the special endowment of the new king must be understood. Also enlightening is Is 60:1ff, which describes the tasks for which the coming king is endowed with the Spirit. His anointing shall not be merely symbolic, but shall be really effective, since the virtues traditionally associated with it are to be manifested in the king's character and deeds.

Three pairs of special gifts or skills are mentioned in v. 2 following the reference to the Spirit. If this first reference in 2a is taken as the equivalent of a strong stem, and the six gifts of 2bcd as six branches coming out of the central stem, then we have the possible basis for the notion of the seven Spirits of God (or seven gifts of the Spirit), which might have its prototype in the seven-branched lampstand of the Tabernacle.²⁹

The first pair of gifts of v. 2 is "the spirit of wisdom (*hokmâ*) and of understanding (*bînâ*) ". These words refer to practical knowledge and discernment, and a classic example of its application is given in the famous

judgment of king Solomon concerning the case of two harlots who disputed over the motherhood of a child (1 Kg 3:16–28). According to 1 Kg 3:12 God had granted him “a wise (*hākām*) and discerning (*nābôn*) heart”. It is said that as he settled the case all Israel recognized that he had the wisdom of God to administer justice (1 Kg 3:28). The obvious fact that v. 2 as well as the stories of Solomon reflect the marks of strong Wisdom influence may suggest that from the beginning Wisdom was connected with royalty and statecraft.

The second pair of gifts is “the spirit of counsel (*‘ēšāh*) and (the spirit) of might (*g^ēbûrâ*) ”. “Counsel” can be explained in terms of instruction, of guiding wisdom, revealed in judicious and perspicacious planning, in the plotting of a comprehensive strategy to confront a given situation, whether in time of war or peace. This skill is greatly needed in the field of political diplomacy. Its association here and in 36:5 (= 2 Kg 18:20) with “might” (cf. also 9:5, where, on the Egyptian model and perhaps in accordance with the royal ritual of Jerusalem, the new king is given four throne names,³⁰ among which we find “Wonderful Counsellor” and “Mighty God”) is perfectly reasonable, since a wisely-laid plan or strategy is of no use if there is no power available to ensure its effective implementation. However, for the coming ideal king there shall be no want of power for the execution of his just designs. *g^ēbûrâ* is the special quality proper to the *gibbôr*, the hero, the strong, valiant man. So the spirit of might is also the spirit of heroic action. And the new king will need it if he is going to defend the poor and “slay the wicked” (v. 4), or “crush the oppressor” (Ps 72:4) in battle. As in the case of the *šōp^ētîm*, the liberator heroes of old, his wise strategies and their successful execution shall be due to the work of the Spirit of Yahweh with which he shall be effectively anointed. His gifts are not meant to be used in the cause of self-glorification, but in the accomplishment of God’s purpose, in his cherished project of

establishing justice on earth.

The third pair of Divine gifts or works of the Spirit is "the spirit of knowledge (*da'at*) (of Yahweh) and of fear (*yir'at*) of Yahweh". They provide the internal reason or proper motivation for the king's actions. It is known that the knowledge of God, in the Hebrew concept, is not limited to the sense of insight into the nature and attributes of God. It involves thought and corresponding action. It is worth recalling here again Jeremiah's insight (22:15-16) that to know Yaweh is to practice justice, is to deliver the poor and oppressed. It is through this new king that the nations will come to know Yahweh, for under his rule "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Yahweh as the waters cover the sea" (v. 9; cf. 2:3; Mi 4:2). The fear of Yahweh points to true piety and devotion, to godly fear and reverent humility, with a clear bearing on moral conduct. According to the sages it is the source from which springs true knowledge (Pr 1:7). As Kaiser correctly states, "Here is to be found the self-limitation of knowledge and power in the recognition of the fact that even the mightiest upon earth are still subject to God".³¹

Whether or not the explanatory note in v. 3, "and his delight shall be in the fear of Yahweh", is a gloss or dittography (cf. textual note 3.a, p. 338), appended to the list of gifts of v. 2 it stresses the fundamental role of the fear of Yahweh in the life and government of the new king. Literally 3a can be rendered, "and his smelling with delight (*wah^arih^ô*) (will be) in the fear of Yahweh". With the accusative the verb *ri^ah* means "to smell, to perceive odour" (Gn 8:21; 27:27; 1 Sa 26:19), but with the preposition *b* it denotes a perception with pleasure (Ex 30:38; Lv 26:31), which metaphorically is expressed by "to delight in" (here and Am 5:21). It could be said that the fear of Yahweh in other people will be as delightful to the king as an offering is to

God. Thus we have the portrait of an ideal, perfect ruler. What was being unsuccessfully sought in the disappointing rulers of Israel and Judah was to be seen in plenitude in the coming Anointed of Yahweh. Unlike the former, he shall rule in total submission to God's will and empowered by his Spirit. He shall live up to all the royal duties divinely required of a king (the principles of which could also be applied to any system of government).

In vv. 3b-5 we have a hint on the king's ideology of government through a brief description of the guiding principles of his conduct and the basic line of his "sociopolitical programme". All the activities of his government are basically encompassed by the meaning of the verb *šāpat*, "to judge, deliver, rule", which is here used in connection with *yākah*, the meaning of which is variously expressed by "to decide, judge; prove, convict; reprove, rebuke, correct, chastise".

In the exercise of his duties the new king shall not carelessly rely on the traditional, fallible procedures of judicial verification of evidence provided by the ancient Israelite legal system, according to which the mere word of two or three witnesses was enough to convict someone of a crime punishable by the death penalty. Problems of perjury and false accusations, as already seen in the previous chapters, seem to have been a recurrent crime within the ancient Israelite society, as an indispensable device in the process of corruption of the judicial courts. The classic example of a case of this nature is the plot of Jezebel against Naboth to "legally" condemn him to death and take possession of his vineyard (1 Kg 21). The fear of Yahweh is necessary to prevent the course of deception in trial (cf. Ex 20:7, 16; Ps 15:2-3).

What is heard and seen is important, but the king shall not depend exclusively on these ordinary sources of information, the evidence of the

senses. If absolute justice is to be done, an attentive and effective examination of the evidence has to be carried out. Indeed, endowed with the spirit of knowledge and discernment, the king cannot be deceived by that which is brought before him on whatever pretext. He shall be able to see, as God himself who enables him sees, the heart of men (cf. 1 Sa 16:7), the inner motives and reasoning of the people, fulfilling what is said in Pr 16:10 and 20:8. Then "no longer shall the fool be called noble, nor the knave honourable" (Is 32:5), nor the corrupt or oppressor be called benefactor, for "a king shall reign in justice" (Is 32:1).

In v. 4 it is briefly stated what the ideal king and his kingdom is all about. His all-embracing cause is the establishment of justice on earth, and consequently his essential task is the deliverance of the poor and oppressed (*dallîm* and *'a niyyim*; cf. textual note 4.a, p. 339), which cannot be attained and ensured without the complete defeat of the powers of oppression. These are here represented by the *'āriš* (read instead of *'eres*, "earth"; cf. textual note 4.b, p. 339), "tyrant, oppressor, ruthless", the oppressive rulers such as those referred to in Is 1:23; 3:14f; 5:8ff; 10:2; etc.,³² and the *rāšā'*, "wicked", who in the Psalms, as we have seen, is generally depicted as oppressor, exploiter (especially of the fatherless and the widow), bloodthirsty, liar, deceiver, unjust, cunning, unmerciful, bribe-lover, violent against the poor and weak.³³

It is a misleading interpretation of 4ab ("And he shall judge the poor in justice, and shall decide with equity for the oppressed of the earth") to argue that the poor and the oppressed are here simply singled out as the recipients of the benefits of his reign, and that if even they get their right, everybody else surely will.³⁴ This type of traditional view seems to minimize the importance of the king's compassion and care for the poor, as if this were an

issue of relative importance, just one among his other and perhaps more commendable duties, mentioned here simply by way of example. It is true that everybody else will get their right, but what counts here in the first place and is object of exclusive attention is *the right of the poor*. Unlike the prevailing system in our modern western society, in this new kingdom the rights of the "others" start where the rights of the poor end. In other words, the rights of the poor will come first, and in consequence the traditional standing rights of the "others" will have to be redefined (which might imply the loss of certain "rights" and privileges, whether institutionalized or otherwise) in the light of the *restoration* of the rights of the poor. The familiar "the-strong-first" or "the-rich-first" social structure, which the prophets also so vehemently denounce, will be dismantled. The king will change the rules. "Justice for the poor" is his moto, his banner, his fundamental ruling project, his sacred cause. Above all it is the very reason for his advent. It is in response to the cry of the poor and oppressed that the king will come. It is this historical, existential cry that sets the agenda of his government (cf. Ps 76:9[10]; 12:5[6]; 9:12[13]).

Another expression of this traditional (and misleading) interpretation, which insists in opposing "the right of the others" (which the text completely ignores) to the right of the poor, is that which takes the king's justice in a merely forensic sense. It is presented, for instance, by Clements, who states: "The royal virtue was that the king sought justice, without favour for either the rich or the poor (Exod. 23:3)".³⁵ One has to bear in mind that "to judge the poor with justice" means much more than just impartially settling single and incidental disputes between two individuals in court, one of whom happens to be poor and the other rich. We also should not fail to recognize the fact that a strong bias (the word is not totally adequate but is helpful) for the poor is clearly seen here and throughout the Old Testament, especially in similar

passages dealing with the coming just king of the future. And such a "bias", which is in fact the expression of God's loving compassion and deliberate commitment to act on behalf of the poor, can only be explained on the basis of the assumption that, from God's point of view, as suggested by the Israelite tradition, poverty is rooted in an existing situation of injustice, either in its origins or in its development and preservation, which demands reparation.³⁶ Seen from this perspective, poverty would be only admissible as an option, as a voluntarily adopted condition, for only then is a correlate situation of injustice not to be found.

It is in this context that the idea of "equity" or "fairness" (*mîšôr*) is to be understood. It is not the impartiality of a judge in a particular trial, based on a traditional legal practice, as though it made no difference whether a poor person is interfering in the rights of a rich man, or vice versa. Seen from the perspective of our own historical experience, the fairness due to the poor has always been partial and relative, for their rights have been diversely defined in different societies (be they capitalist or marxist, autocratic or democratic) directly and indirectly by those who hold power, by the ruling classes, which are not poor. In fact the determination of what is fair to the poor is not only in the hands of those who make the laws and those who administer them, since their work forcibly reflects, above all, the interests of the dominant power structures of society. On such grounds the defence of the rights of the poor can be significant, insofar as excessive exploitation and abuse can be partially eliminated, but still not good enough to eradicate injustice altogether, which still remains hidden and active in the fabric of society. In the case of the king, who is endowed with God's Spirit, all injustice (as understood by God) is supposed to be detected under the scrutiny of his special wisdom and discernment. His crusade for justice is expected to affect all levels of

human life. He shall overturn the establishment and create an ideal, theocratic sociopolitical order.

Special difficulty for modern readers of the Bible is posed by verses like lines 4cd, which refer to the austerity of the coming king in dealing with his adversaries:

He will smite the oppressor with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he will kill the wicked.

Since they seem disturbing in the light of our modern ethical presuppositions, it is not unusual for commentators and preachers to try to attenuate their meaning or tone them down. However, as we said in reference to Ps 72:4, justice for the poor involves their liberation from their oppressors. The king has to face his enemies in order to accomplish justice for the poor. On the one hand, one might admit that persuasion and subjection, at least in part, is likely to be implied; but on the other hand (and the biblical emphasis is always on this side), fierce opposition to the king on the part of the mighty and wicked (*'ārīš, rāšā'*) who exploit and oppress the poor is also supposed to occur (cf. 1:27-28). Therefore, these enemies of the poor, and for this same reason also called the enemies of Yahweh, will be 'smitten (*nkh*) or killed (*mwt*), or even crushed (*dk*) as Ps 72:4 puts it (cf. Ps 89:22-23[23-24]). The context seems to imply colossal warfare, but given the fact that the king is endowed with Divine virtues, conferred on him by the Spirit of Yahweh, like God he does not need to make use of ordinary weapons of war. The "rod of his mouth" or "the breath of his lips", which is his very word, is all that he needs. His word shares the power of God's own creative word as expressed in Ps 33:6 (cf. also Is 55:10-11; Jer 23:29; Ho 6:5):

By the word of Yahweh the heavens were made,

and by the breath of his mouth, all their hosts.

The narrative of 2 Kg 1:9-12, which tells how Elijah got rid of two captains of fifty and their men with the power of his word (making fire come down from heaven), and 2 Kg 2:23-25, which tells how forty-two boys were killed by two she-bears due to a curse of Elisha, are good illustrations of the power of the word in action, which provide a background over against which v. 4cd can be understood. The New Testament also provides good examples that can be adduced. One of them is the tragic case of Ananias and Sapphira, as recorded in Acts 5:1-11, who suddenly expired, one at a time, as they heard Peter's rebuking words. The stilling of the waters and the wind by the power of Jesus' word, can be another example, although here the objects affected are inanimate elements, and not sinners or human foes. However, the picture that Rev 19:11-21 presents of him is quite different. Here the Messiah is vividly depicted as he defeats the powerful coalition of his enemies (kings, captains, mighty men and their armies) in battle, whom he slays "by the sword that issues from his mouth" (cf. 2 Thes 2:8).

To speculate on how the "rod of his mouth" or the "breath of his lips" can be actualized today in the struggle against the oppressors of the poor could be fruitless and even misleading, for the emphasis of the text is not on the "word" as such but on its use as an extraordinary weapon of warfare (as to confirm the king's supra-human or divine-like character) used to attain that which the text is really emphasizing: the annihilation of his enemies, so that the liberation of the poor can be accomplished. And this is intended to be literally understood. What people ask today, as they engage themselves in the struggle on behalf of the poor, is whether or not they should use violent means to attain their objectives. Some will conclude that violence against

injustice is not violence, but justice, in the Old Testament sense, and the attitude of the king would certainly be adduced as corroborative. Others perhaps will see in the use of the "word" a suggestion for the use of more pacific means, although the destructive power of the king's "word" seems even more effective than any conventional weapon of war. But the word of God, in the power of the Spirit, even on human lips, as in the case of the eighth century prophets, can also be used with effectiveness, given its pervasive, long lasting power. This "prophetic role" is the alternative taken up by others.

The king's heroic character and absolute keenness for justice is further emphasized by v. 5:

And justice will be the belt of his waist,
and faithfulness the girdle of his loins.

The term *'ēzôr*, "girdle, waistcloth", appears twice in this verse, according to MT, but it is quite possible that *'ēsûr*, "bond, band, girdle", was originally read in parallelism with *'ēzôr* (cf. textual note 5.b, p. 340). In any event, we have here a reference to a girdle, a loin cloth which in ancient times was worn by someone prepared to engage in a bout of wrestling with an opponent. The winner was the one who managed to wrest the girdle from the opponent. It seems that the custom of wrestling with the girdle was well known in the Ancient World.³⁷ The concept developed and later on it came to be figuratively used of anyone who was ready to face a combat, a contest, a struggle. In Is 5:27 it is said of the Assyrian soldiers that "not a girdle is loose", pointing to their readiness, skills, and power in combat.

The end of v. 4 has just shown that the new king will fight his foes, and indeed, as seen in v. 5, he is prepared to engage in battle. His girdle is justice (*šedeq*) and faithfulness (*'ēmûnâ*). As an invincible hero, he will not let anybody

wrest his girdle. Justice is attached to him like his most intimate and noblest piece of clothing, which cannot be loose and should be defended at any cost and with the utmost effort. Justice is what he esteems and honours most, it is his all-consuming cause, the ever tight support of his honour and dignity. The king's character and his entire royal office are inviolably marked by justice and faithfulness (cf. Jer 23:5-6; 33:15-16). The same pair of attributes is also applied to God in Ps 33:4-5; 36:6-7[7-8]; and 89:15[16].

7.2.2. The Coming Kingdom of Peace

As the result of the establishment of justice on earth under the rule of God's future Anointed King, peace will extend to all realms of life. Verses 1-5 deal with the relationship between the king and his subjects, from which results the creation of a just and peaceful order within human society. But even Nature, which from the beginning (Gn 3:17-19) is said to have been disturbed by man's sin, and continues to be irrationally exploited and devastated, also will be freed and radically transformed.

There are passages in the Old Testament, like Ps 72 for instance, which describe the transformation to be wrought in the realm of Nature by stressing the restoration of the fertility of the soil and its prodigious abundance of crops, but which are silent in regard to the animal kingdom. The picture we have in Is 11:6-8, on the other hand, is one of harmony among beasts and between men and beasts. In both cases, however, the whole of Creation is implied as enjoying a new order of peace. Though now animals naturally prey on each other (like the rich oppressors who "prey" on the poor), the isaianic picture shows that all their natural hostility will disappear. They will be harmless to men, who in turn will give up their predatory behaviour.

There are some texts in the Old Testament which to some extent share in

the meaning of verses 6-8. The theme of Nature is often dealt with in the Wisdom literature, but there it is primarily viewed as a source of illustration and examples applied to human conduct. One text in Job (5:22-23), however, seems to point to a cherished idyllic time when, under the gracious favour of the Almighty, men "shall be in league with the stones of the field" (they shall not harm the farmer's ploughshare), "and the beasts of the field shall be at peace" with them (the shepherd's tent is safe and nothing is missed in his fold; cf. v. 24). Is 65:25 looks like a brief summary of our passage, as we argued in the first section of this chapter. Also in Ho 2:18-23[20-25], another passage which deals with the coming era of peace, a reference to the animals is found (v. 18):

And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground; and I will break the bow, the sword, and war from the earth; and I will make you lie down in safety.

Other passages (Is 35:9; Ez 34:25-28; cf. Lv 26:6) present a different notion which points to the absence of beasts in the coming era of peace and salvation.

Our text here clearly points to the restoration of the lost Edenic peace (Gn 1:29-30), according to which man and animals lived in harmony and shared a common source of food, the plants and their fruits, i.e. they both had a vegetarian diet. A similar type of hope for a return of Paradise has also been found in extra-biblical sources, either in classic authors or in the ancient Near Eastern literature.³⁸ Whether there is any direct connection between our text and the extra-biblical references, is impossible for us to determine. All that we can say is that they bear an accordant witness to a long cherished human hope for an age of perfect peace and harmony in all realms of life.

There are authors who interpret 11:6-8 as a "symbolic description of the peace which reigns among the inhabitants of Zion",³⁹ when "the mighty will live peacefully with the weak (v. 6), ruthless exploiters of the poor and needy will change their habits (v. 7), and the vulnerable will be immune from danger (v. 8)".⁴⁰ This interpretation looks attractive, but there is nothing in the text to indicate that it should be taken figuratively. The external evidence of names of animals being used figuratively (cf. Gn 49:27; Zep 3:3; etc., where wolves are associated with oppression, and Jer 11:19; etc., where lamb stands for helplessness) is not sufficient for one to believe that such an interpretation is to be applied here. On the contrary, the existence of biblical and extra-biblical texts dealing with the same theme, and features such as the style, context, and wider relations of the text, all point to the fact that it was written to be understood literally, or perhaps hyperbolically, but not as a symbolic extension of the preceding section (vv. 1-5). In the opinion of Kaiser,

In the end, the present text merely expresses the longing for a life with no danger. The fact that the beasts of prey feed with domestic animals means that the farmer no longer will have losses among his herds. If a young child can look after the flocks, being a shepherd has become a peaceful idyll.⁴¹

No matter how one interprets this futuristic vision of an ideal age of peace, one has to concede that an important and timely notion is here implied. Man has ostensibly sinned against God's Creation, and in particular against the animal domain. Once justice allied with the fear of God has become predominant in the realm of human society, man is likely to realize his responsibility toward Nature, and will learn to respect and care for the animals and all other forms of life. According to the narrative of Gn 3 man's sin brought curse upon himself and upon all creation. The very threat posed to

man by animals, according to Lv 26:22, is due to human sin and Divine punishment. As evil ceases among the rational creation, the curse over the non-rational creation is bound to disappear. The general picture is that the restoration of the order in the entire cosmos is dependent on the establishment of authentic justice among men.

Turning now to a closer look at v. 6, we find it preferable to emend *wmr̄y*' (MT), "fatling", to *ymr̄'w*, "shall feed", following LXX and 1QIs^a (cf. textual note 6.a, p. 340). With a verb and two animals (instead of three) in stich 6c, the structure of the poem is improved, and becomes even better if we read 7c preceding 6c, for then we attain a logical order in the arrangement of the animals by pairs: ox--calf / lion--lion cub; wolf--lamb / leopard--kid. Stichs 6a and 6b form a remarkable chiasmus, stressing the action or state of the animals by placing the verbal forms in the extremes. The wolf, a strong and ferocious animal and a proverbial enemy of the lamb (a fact which is vividly captured in the well known fable of Phaedrus), shall dwell with the lamb without posing any threat, and likewise the leopard shall lie down with the kid. And supposedly this is only made possible because of the Divine power and blessing conferred by the Spirit of Yahweh on the king, which through his just government pervades and affects the entire realm of life. In 6c7c we have a pair of adult beasts (lion and ox) and a pair of their young (calf and lion cub), one of them in each pair being formerly wild and the other tame, feeding together without any disturbance. The picture is made even more vivid with the presence of a defenceless young boy, who leads them without fear and in perfect safety, like an experienced shepherd that drives his flock.

According to v. 7 the bear looses its natural ferocity and finds itself at peace, enjoying the friendship of domestic animals. The reference here seems

to be to a female bear (though the word *dōb* is normally masculine) sharing the food and friendly company of a cow, since the predicate is in the fem. plural, as well as the suffix at the end of 7b. Besides, the presence of their young lying peacefully around them seems to confirm this view. The main point is that all ferocity (usually more intensely manifested by female animals in the company of their young), enmity and threat is gone, as already seen in verse 6.

The picture that we have of these animals seems remarkably elaborated. The description of their peaceful association is arranged in such a way as to stress their usual contrasting nature and features: domestic and wild, ferocious and tame, strong and weak, young and adult, carnivorous and graminivorous. The presence of a boy makes the idyllic vision more complete, and points to the fact that human beings are still very much a part of the whole scene, in which they play an important role. The reference to a lion eating straw (cut-feed) could be seen as a highly poetic expression, not different from Paul's language in Rm 8:19–23. It is perhaps a stylized reflection upon the words of Gn 1:30.

Verse 8 forms a perfect chiasmus, putting in evidence the careless actions of small children, playing with delight at the hole of fearful, poisonous serpents, usually considered the most deadly enemies of man. Here the serpents are specified as the cobra (*peten*) and possibly the viper (*šip'ônā*). The children mentioned are described as the suckling (*yônēq*) and the just weaned child (*gāmûl*), which would be under two or three years of age (cf. Is 28:9; Ps 13:12[12]).

The extraordinary state of peace and harmony brought about among the beasts and between men and beasts during the reign of justice of the Branch

of Jesse is here climaxed, as human babies, the weakest and most vulnerable of all creatures, play harmlessly at the hole of poisonous snakes, traditionally viewed as the most feared and malignant creatures among the animals. This picture points to a final reconciliation between the two most ancient enemies in the Hebrew tradition (Gn 3:15). In fact, it points to a total reverse of Gn 3, where innocence is lost in the face of evil. But here the opposition between innocence (represented by the child) and evil (represented by the serpent) has disappeared, and harmony has returned to God's creation as it used to be prior to Gn 3.

Verse 9 provides a kind of summary of the two preceding sections, stressing the universal range of the coming age of peace and reaffirming its foundation. The subject of 9a is indefinite, but it is likely that the animals and in particular men, the most predatory among God's creatures, are meant here, as those who "shall not harm or destroy in all my holy mountain". This makes a deliberate contrast to the violence, oppression, and corruption prevalent in Judah in the times of the prophet Isaiah (cf. 3:14-15; 9:19-20; 10:1-2). Our poem is an expression of hope and also a promise that the injustice and violence against the poor and weak is bound to disappear (cf. 29:19-21) in the days of the future ideal king from David's house.

The phrase "all my holy mountain" is supposed to mean more than the temple hill or Jerusalem. It alludes to the whole country. In fact, in the light of 9b, where *'eres* (as in Hb 2:14) is to be rendered "earth", this phrase can be understood as applying to the whole world, inasmuch as, in addition, we know from other passages that the king shall have a universal reign. As Clements points out, "The language is traditional, so that an early narrow (and mythological?) connotation has apparently been extended to regard the whole

world as the sacred mountain of God".⁴² Zion, sometimes compared to *šapan*, the cosmic mountain of the Canaanite mythology, has become the capital of the world, the centre of the universe, the place from which the new king shall judge and rule all the nations (cf. 2:1-4).

The knowledge of Yahweh is presented as the reason for the absence of harm in the world, or put in other words, for the fulness of peace (*šālôm*) enjoyed by all living creatures. To "know" Yahweh is more than being informed about him. It is to act according to his will, to be committed to his cause. As made explicit in Jer 22:13-16, already referred to, to know Yahweh is to practice justice, understood (as the same text shows) as the deliverance of the poor and needy. According to the simile of 9b, this knowledge will be so deep and so broad that it will cover the whole earth (or dry land) just as the waters cover the sea to the fulness of its capacity.

Final Remarks

At the close of this chapter we should perhaps add a few comments to what has already been said in connection to the man-Nature relationship. The royal poem we have been dealing with is not only a sign of hope for the poor but also for Nature, for both suffer the consequences of sin and are put under oppression and exploitation. The same human greed that crushes the poor also devastates and disrupts the environment, causing ecologic problems of unpredictable consequences. The cause of Nature is also a cause of justice. Like the poor oppressed who cries to his Creator in the hope of justice, and is heard by him, so does Nature too, which according to Rm 8:19-22 "suffers and groans" waiting for its redemption, when it too shall be freed from its bondage and decay. Indeed in the same way in which the poor have their rights against their oppressors, so has Nature against its exploiters. Therefore, the same God

who will rise up to save all the oppressed of the earth (as said in the Psalms) will also, in the same act, destroy those who destroy the earth (Rev 11:18). The liberation of men is closely related to the liberation of Nature.

If from an eschatological perspective the prospects of fulness of peace, harmony and equilibrium within the whole of Creation are optimistic, from the perspective of our historical and current experience the horizons are indeed utterly bleak. A misunderstanding of the meaning of man's rule over Nature in Genesis 1 has transformed the modern western world, with its advanced technological science, into a catastrophic threat to life as a whole in this planet. In his enlightening and stimulating article, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis", Lynn White, Jr.⁴³ brings this problem to the fore, and since, as he says, historically modern science is an extrapolation of natural theology and modern technology is partly an "Occidental, voluntarist realization of the Christian dogma of man's transcendence of, and rightful mastery over, nature", he is led to conclude that Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt for our disastrous ecologic backlash. However it is in Christianity, namely in Saint Francis of Assisi, that he finds an example of a commendable attitude toward man's relationship to Nature:

Francis tried to depose man from his monarchy over creation and set up a democracy of all God's creatures. With him the ant is no longer simply a homily for the lazy, flames a sign of the thrust of the soul toward union with God; now they are Brother Ant and Sister Fire, praising the Creator in their own ways as Brother Man does in his.⁴⁴

Lynn White also argues that it is not more science and more technology that will get us out of the present ecologic crisis, for "since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious,

whether we call it that or not".⁴⁵ Summing up his basic arguments, he says:

. . . the present increasing disruption of the global environment is the product of a dynamic technology and science which were originating in the Western medieval world against which Saint Francis was rebelling in so original a way. Their growth cannot be understood historically apart from distinctive attitudes toward nature which are deeply grounded in Christian dogma. The fact that most people do not think of these attitudes as Christian is irrelevant. No new set of basic values has been accepted in our society to displace those of Christianity. Hence we shall continue to have a worsening ecologic crisis until we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man.⁴⁶

It is true that in trying to find a solution for our present ecologic crisis we have to rethink our "dogmas" and change our attitude. And it is also true that within our own Christian tradition, particularly in our Scriptures, and chiefly in the Old Testament, we find elements that not only bring us the necessary awareness of the essential importance of Creation but also serve to renew our hopes in regard to the future and challenge us to a militant commitment on behalf of justice in the present, which includes not only the liberation of the poor but the rescue of Nature as well. The royal poem of Is 11:1-9 is undeniably one of the most extraordinary witnesses to this fact in the Old Testament.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

With regard to the cry of the ancient Hebrews in Egypt, we saw that despite its similarities, as a motif, with that found in the Babylonian mythology (thus an expression of a human, universal experience), its importance for the Hebrews, on the other hand, went far beyond the limits of comparison. For them the cry had a historical *locus*. It was the cry of oppressed humans (their own forefathers) in search for freedom. It was that cry that aroused God's mercy and set his saving power in motion, disclosed as an act of justice for or liberation of the poor and oppressed Israelites.

That was Israel's "primal cry", uttered at the time when they came into existence as a nation, and through which they became bound to Yahweh, the God who compassionately heard their cry in the land of Egypt. The memory of that cry, vividly preserved in Israel's religious institutions and national consciousness, as attested in different literary genres and historical stages in the Old Testament, was a permanent reminder of the fact that whenever the poor and oppressed cry for help, Yahweh, who makes himself the kinsman of the poor, is bound to interve on their behalf.

However, the harsh facts of life, as seen in the experience of Job, stress the fact that God's mercy and power does not cancel human suffering altogether. The time of affliction and pain may be long lasting, and so the cry may be, at times, as in the case of an agonizing and perplexed Job, expressed as a bitter and stinging lament which does not leave even God himself unscathed. The unfortunate plight of the poor and innocent and their

oppression by the rich and powerful are depicted in full colours, in exquisite and delicate details, only to evince the fact that despite all that God remains absent or indifferent before human injustice and suffering. Doubt is cast on the fairness of God's retributive practice and the innocence of the sufferer (which is indeed recognized in the end) is utterly stressed.

Human as it is, Job's experience is not one of darkness and despair alone. Light is sometimes seen at the end of the dark tunnel of harsh suffering. He does not lose hope, and in the end, as the story highlights, God comes to his rescue, although not without rebuking him for his *hybris*. The fierce theological debate developed throughout this (Job's Book) long lament framed in the Wisdom style serves to put in evidence the truth that the sufferer is not necessarily a guilty sinner, but simply an innocent human being, and such are the helpless poor whose unfortunate plight Job so well describes and whom in his past days of good memory he so diligently cared for, doing what was rightfully expected of any man in his position. Also put in evidence is the fact that no matter how long it may take, in the end God shall come to rescue the helpless innocent who cry to him out of their oppression and misery. The suffering of the poor may prevail for a long while, but not for ever.

This fact is indeed attested in the Lament Psalms, which can be seen as the backbone of Israel's ancient cultic liturgy. The cry which resounds in Israel's historico-national consciousness from the time of the exodus, and which is stylized in the Wisdom poetry in the Book of Job, is here depicted either as related to the real present, historical trials of the nation or as the rather personal, day by day experience of a great host of sufferers who, moved by faith and hope in the saving character of Yahweh, resort to him through the means provided by the religious cultic institution, whereby

Yahweh is held as the true rock of salvation, or the Just Judge, the last resource of the helpless poor and oppressed. Misfortunes of different kinds are brought before God by a variety of worshippers, but it is primarily the cry of the poor and the ancient judicial rite associated with the sanctuary that provide the basis for the interpretation of a number of Laments, the understanding of the structure of the salvific experience as articulated in the Israelite cultus, and the appreciation of the imagery preserved in psalms of presumably late composition and in the New Testament.

More often than not it is the cry of the real poor, the real servant, the real captive, the real "righteous" (the innocent) that is brought before Yahweh's court in the sanctuary in the hope of justice. This is especially so in regard to pre-exilic times. Institutionalized as it is here, expressed in the form of prayers of lament, the cry of the sufferer attains a place of extraordinary prominence in Israel's faith and cultic life, and a striking variety of terms and expressions are employed in the process of approaching and pleading with God, which vividly convey the suppliant's agony, complaints, confidence, and eagerness to be heard. Here, in the sanctuary, the same Yahweh who had mercifully heard the cry of the oppressed Hebrews in Egypt, who had liberated his people time after time from their enemies by the hands of the Judges (or liberators), is still believed (on the basis of the actual experience of needy worshippers) to be attentive to the cry of his people. Although it cannot be said with certainty how long the Israelite cultic institution provided concrete means for helping the poor and innocent in their crucial trials, it is nonetheless significant that it left indelible marks in Israel's faith and vision of the future.

Although the experience of deliverance is invariably associated with the cry, whether in the people's national life (starting from the Exodus), in a

Wisdom theologico-literary treatise (the Book of Job), or in the abundant laments of the individual (attested by the characteristic "change of mood" and the corresponding, complementary Psalms of Thanksgiving), such an experience is, however, always seen as limited and temporary, despite its crucial importance. Historically, in the short and long run, oppression follows oppression, and deliverance follows deliverance. The problem of injustice is not done away with completely, but rather accumulates. Thus the cry of the poor and oppressed becomes a permanent plea before God. Along with the cry of the whole of Creation it presses for God's full, ultimate salvific intervention in human history, so that sin and injustice may be got rid of altogether.

The answer to such an existential, universal cry, as we have stressed, is articulated in the Psalms and Prophets, where very significantly the personal, individualized cry of the poor also matters. Whereas the poor and oppressed voice their cry before God in the sanctuary, the Prophets (especially in the Eighth Century B.C.) voice their rights and God's vengeance on their account before the rich, the powerful, and the people in general. It is to be observed, however, that the eighth century prophets' condemnation of the cult (which had become futile and ineffective against injustice) may suggest that at least at that time the religious institution played no significant role in protecting the poorer members of society.

Psalms and Prophets alike envisage and hope for an ideal future, when the last (the poor) will be the first, when a new social order built on justice will be established by a just king (incidentally from the royal house of David), who will rule as the viceroy of Yahweh himself. Stress is laid on his strict character of justice, and the deliverance of the poor, which is his primary duty. Thus he smites the powers of chaos, i.e. the powers of injustice embodied in

the tyrants and wicked oppressors of the poor, whose misdeeds of exploitation and violence cause havoc in the social order and in the realm of Nature.

Such acts of judgment entail the advent of an age of universal peace marked by the extraordinary prodigality of Nature, restored and increased in its vitality. The abundance of the food produced is, presumably, especially designed to satiate the hungry poor, who have always been deprived of adequate sustenance. Now in Yahweh's kingdom of justice they can feast. Also significant is the fact that it is the king's care for the poor that leads to the recognition of the legitimacy of his reign, and thus to his universal dominion. The fear of God is pleasing to him and shared by his subjects. Through his endeavours the primitive triangular harmony between God, man, and Nature is completely restored.

It has also become clear that the motif of the cry of the poor, which is theologically developed in ancient Israel, is the reflection of a broad and common reality within the human experience, which always points to a prevalent situation of injustice. In reflecting upon this motif, as theologically articulated by the primitive Israelites, we cannot fail to recognize its glaring affinities with our own present social reality and to feel compelled to give heed, in the name of God, to the cry of the poor and oppressed today, particularly in the so-called Third World, where they scandalously comprise the vast majority of the population. In so doing, due consideration of a number of conclusive ideas which have here been confirmed and stressed, becomes imperative. We close by listing a few of them:

a) God's bias towards the poor in the Old Testament is an undeniable reality. He is committed to their cause as their kinsman. The poor as such is not a guilty sinner, but a creature of God, victim of injustice by his inherent

condition. Only thus can God's bias be explained. Juridical neutrality does not override this evident fact.

b) God is mindful of the cry of the poor and duly endeavours to bring about their liberation, using sometimes (as also seen in today's world) the most unsuspected ways and instruments to achieve his liberating purpose.

c) God requires the practice of justice, which is fundamentally manifested in the liberation of the poor and oppressed, and such action may sometimes involve the use of force. In the Old Testament view this is not to be seen as violence, but rather justice. Violence is what is practiced by the oppressors of the poor.

d) The concept of peace is attached to the concept of justice and is dependent on it. Without justice in society and at the international level, there can be no prospect of real peace.

e) The service of God or the worship of him becomes fruitless if dissociated from the practice of justice, ignoring the crude reality of the poor and innocent sufferer in their cry of agony.

f) The kingdom of God is primarily a kingdom for the poor, and it is precisely such a character that should be fostered as its primordial appeal.

g) The legitimacy of all instituted governing power is to be ultimately measured over against its effectiveness in complying with its fundamental duty of doing justice to the poor and oppressed.

NOTES

Notes to Introduction

1. Hugo Assmann, *Opression-Liberacion: Desafio a los cristianos* [Oppression-Liberation: A Challenge to Christians] (Montevideo: Tierra Nueva, 1971). To my knowledge this book has not been translated into English.

2. Gustavo Gutierrez, *Teologia de la liberacion, Perspectivas* (Lima: CEP, 1971; Salamanca: Ediciones Sigueme, 1972). E.T., *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*, trans. and ed. Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973; London: SCM Press, 1974). Gutierrez became the most prominent theologian among the exponents of the Latin American Liberation Theology. However, anteceding both Assmann and Gutierrez mention should be made of the Brazilian Presbyterian theologian, Ruben Alves, who, through the publication of his doctoral thesis, *A Theology of Human Hope* in 1969, made a significant contribution to the early process of theological reflection on the liberation theme.

3. Nevertheless, there has been a modest sign of change over the last few years, following the widespread propagation of Liberation Theology. Special mention should be made of the re-emergence of the so-called sociological approach to Old Testament Studies, and place of prominence is to be given to Norman K. Gottwald and Walter Brueggemann, whose works in general undoubtedly represent invaluable contributions to the ongoing reflection on the liberation theme in Latin America. Also welcome is the newly published short but stimulating book by Norbert F. Lohfink, *Option for The Poor: The Basic Principles of Liberation Theology in the Light of the Bible*, ed. Duane L. Christensen, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Berkeley: BIBAL Press, 1987).

4. See, for instance, Thomas D. Hanks, *God So Loved the Third World: The Biblical Vocabulary of Oppression*, trans. James C. Dekker (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1983), p. xi; also Elsa Tamez, *Bible of the Oppressed*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1982), p. 4.

5. George V. Pixley, *God's Kingdom: A Guide for Biblical Study*, trans. Donald D. Walsh (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1977), p. 1.

6. Jose Porfirio Miranda, *Marx y la Biblia: Critica a la Filosofia de la opresion* (Salamanca: Ediciones Sigueme, 1972). E.T. *Marx and the Bible: A Critique of the Philosophy of Oppression*, trans. John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1974; London: SCM Press, 1977).

7. Milton Schwantes, *Das recht der Armen* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1977).

8. Pixley, *Reino de Dios* (Buenos Aires: Editorial La Aurora, 1977). For

the English version of this book (including revisions), see note 5 above.

9. Idem, *Kingdom*, p. 101.

10. Jose Severino Croato, *Liberacion y libertad - Pautas hermeneuticas* (Lima: Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1978). E.T., *Exodus: A Hermeneutics of Freedom*, trans. Salvador Attanasio (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1981). Still bearing on the exodus theme is my work "A funcao dos Milagres na Libertacao do Exodo" (M.Th. [Licenciatura] dissertation, Seminario Biblico Latinoamericano, San Jose, Costa Rica, 1973). One of its chapters has been published separately as "The Miracles of Exodus and the Liberating God", in *Occasional Essays* (Costa Rica) 10 (June 1983), 3-29. The place of prominence given to the exodus theme in the liberation theologies has drawn the attention not only of theologians outside Latin America. An attractive analysis of the exodus narrative as political history, stressing its influence on modern Western political thought, is offered by the political philosopher Michael Walzer in *Exodus and Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

11. Hanks, *Opresion, pobreza y liberacion: Reflexiones biblicas*, Colecion CELEP (Miami: Editorial Caribe, 1982). For the English (revised) version of this book see note 4 above.

12. Hanks, *God So Loved*, p. 38.

13. Elsa Tamez, *La Biblia de los oprimidos: La opresion en la Teologia Biblica* (San Jose, Costa Rica: DEI, 1979). The revised E.T. of this book was cited above in note 4. Chapters 6 and 7 were taken from Tamez's *La hora de la vida* (San Jose, Costa Rica: DEI, 1978).

14. The theme of oppression in the Old Testament has also drawn the attention of Old Testament students in other regions. See, for instance, Jacques Pons, *L'oppression dans L'Ancien Testament* (Paris: Letouzey et Ane, Editeurs, 1981); Y. I. Kim, *The Vocabulary of Oppression in the Old Testament* (Dissertation presented at Drew University, 1981).

Notes to Chapter 1

1. D. Winton Thomas, "A Note on *wayyēda* 'lôhîm in Exod. II:25", *JTS*, 49 (1948), 142-43.

2. Moshe Greenberg, *Understanding Exodus* (New York: Behrman House for the Melton Research Center, 1969), p. 54.

3. Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1967), p. 29.

4. Cited by Brevard S. Childs, *Exodus: A Commentary*, OTL (London: SCM Press, 1974), p. 28.

5. James Philip Hyatt, *Exodus*, NCBC, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; London: Marshal, Morgan & Scott, 1980), p. 69.

6. Otto Kaiser, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, trans. John Sturdy

(Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975), p. 66.

7. Robert Davidson, *The Courage to Doubt: Exploring an Old Testament Theme* (London: SCM Press, 1983), p. 60.

8. In Cassuto's opinion, "it may be assumed that the Torah had before it an epic poem describing the enslavement of the Israelites in Egypt and their liberation from there." *Exodus*, p. 10.

9. The question whether or not the primitive Israelite tribes actually formed an amphictyonic system is irrelevant here. An appropriate assessment of the subject is offered by Andrew D. H. Mayes, *Israel in the Period of the Judges* (London: SCM Press, 1974).

10. Hyatt, *Exodus*, p. 37-38.

11. Georges Auzou, *De la servidumbre al servicio: Estudio del libro del Exodo*, trans. Constantino Ruiz-Garrido, 2nd ed. (Madrid: Ediciones Fax, 1969), pp. 32ff.

12. S. R. Driver, *The Book of Exodus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1918), p. xlivf.

13. J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (London: SCM Press, 1986), pp. 54-79.

14. On the *habiru*/*'apiru* see, for instance, Jean Bottero, *Le problème des Habirou* (Paris: Impr. nationale, 1954); Moshe Greenberg, *The Hab/piru* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1955); E. Dhorme, "Les Habirou et les Hébreux", *RH* 211 (1954), 156-64; William F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan* (London: The Athlone Press, 1968), pp. 64-79; a review of Bottero's work is presented by Roland de Vaux in *RB* 63 (1956), 261-67, who also treats the issue in *The Early History of Israel*, trans. David Smith, 2 vols. (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1978), 1, 105-12; more recent discussions of the subject (with indication of further bibliography) can be seen, for instance, in John Bimson, *Redating the Exodus and Conquest*, *JSOTSS* 5 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1978), pp. 241-247; and J. Alberto Soggin, *A History of Israel*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1984), pp. 101-4.

15. Cf. Hyatt, *Exodus*, p. 42. He offers a good summary of the history of the Exodus period (pp. 37-47), as well as Auzou, *De la servidumbre*, pp. 37-47. Cf. also the standard works on the history of Israel, John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1981), pp. 107-124; Thomas L. Thompson and Dorothy Irvin, "The Joseph and Moses Narratives", in *Israelite and Judean History*, ed. John H. Hayes and J. Maxwell Miller (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977), pp. 149-212; Martin Noth, *The History of Israel*, 3rd Eng. ed. (New York: Harp & Row, Publ., 1960), pp. 110-121.

16. Cf. W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, *Atra-hasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969). Besides text and translation, this work presents an extensive, invaluable introduction, and several other sections of useful supplementary information.

17. Ibid., p. 8.

18. Ibid., p. 108, line 39 of the Assyrian recension.

19. Ibid., p. 13.

20. A short commentary on the Epic of Atra-hasis in the light of the Exodus is presented by J. Severino Croato in *Exodus*, pp.

21. Lambert and Millard, *Atra-hasis*, p. 28.

22. Lambert discusses this principle in Babylonian thought in "Myth and Ritual as Conceived by the Babylonians", *JSS* 13 (1968), 104-112.

23. The end of v. 10, "and go up from the land", suggests that the Israelites could already have been serving Pharaoh in a disadvantageous situation, and that the next step was only designed to turn things worse. However, it is possible that the rendering of the NEB, "will become masters of the country", is more suitable for the context.

24. Cf. *KB*, p. 540; *TWAT*, 4, 1006-9.

25. Cf. Hyatt, *Exodus*, pp. 59-60. After the time of the Ramessides Per-Ramessu was known as *š'nt* from which came the name Tanis in Greek and Zoan in Hebrew (Is 19:11, 13; 30:4; Ez 30:14). The reference to Pithom and Rameses in Ex. 1:11 (J) is usually taken as basic for the dating of the oppression of the Israelites. For a different appraisal of this verse, however, see D. B. Redford, "Exodus 1:11", *VT* 13 (1963), 401-18.

26. Cf. *KB*, p. 779; *BDB*, p. 827.

27. Cf. David M. Gunn, "The 'Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart': Plot, Character and Theology in Ex 1-14", in *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature*, JSOTSS 19, ed. David J. A. Clines, David M. Gunn and Alan J. Hauser (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982), pp. 72-96.

28. Auzou, *De la servidumbre*, p. 65.

29. Such an emendation had been proposed as early as 1896 by T. K. Cheyne, in "Notes on Psalm xxii.25 and Nahum 11:8", *JBL* 15 (1896), 198. He cites Ps 55:3[4] as an example of another passage where the initial consonant *š* of *ša'at* is missing. Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms I: 1-50*, AB, 2nd ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1973), p. 142, following Theodore H. Gaster, "A Canaanite Ritual Drama", *JAOS* 66 (1946), 56, derives *'nūt* from the root *'nh* IV, "to sing", whereby the reference would be to the song (of lamentation) of the afflicted. This also remains as a possibility.

30. Cassuto, *Exodus*, p. 34.

31. Martin Noth, *Exodus*, trans. J. S. Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1962), p. 40.

32. For a relevant study of the vocabulary of salvation, although framed within the scope of a methodological approach, in which prominence is

obviously given to *hissil* along with *hōššî^a*, see John F. A. Sawyer, *Semantics in Biblical Research: New Methods of Defining Hebrew Words for Salvation* (London: SCM Press, 1972).

33. The question of the dispossession of the Canaanites is beyond the scope of our present investigation. However, we should perhaps acknowledge the fact, even in passing, that it poses a real theological problem which cannot be easily avoided. It is not, as some might think, simply a good problem for one to confront liberation theologians. All serious and theologically minded readers of the Bible often ask themselves why after the astounding epic event of the exodus, which brought about freedom to oppressed slaves, we have the disconcerting narrative of the Conquest of Canaan which depicts those same ex-slaves (to be more precise, the children of those ex-slaves) taking possession of the promised land by slaying, enslaving or throwing out its original inhabitants. The contrast is evident. Whereas the exodus event is explained according to the principle of justice, the Conquest has to be construed on a dissimilar basis. For the shapers of Israel's tradition, who read back their own history and recorded it in the way they did, there was no conflict. On the contrary, they sought to depict the Conquest as as colossal a victory as possible, thus laying stress on God's faithfulness and power still working on their behalf and also underlining the conviction that the land was a gift of God himself. And their harshness in dealing with the Canaanites, after all, was not dissonant with the prevalent standards of warfare praxis in those days. For them (and for Biblical Theology) the Conquest can be explained on the grounds of their divine, gracious election, which, seen from a wider perspective, incorporates the principle of "some victims but not all". In general terms, the fate of the Canaanites is not seen apart from the concept of God's sovereign rule over the nations, whereby he executed judgment upon the antediluvian world, upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and a number of nations (including the later Israelite kingdoms themselves) during the Assyrian and Babylonian expansion. It was necessary for Amos to undermine the false assurance that the election theology had created among his contemporaries. He pointed to the fact that God had provided an "exodus experience" for other peoples as well, and made it clear that the idea of election that precludes justice has lost its sense and its effect. On the basis of historical reconstruction, the picture of the settlement in the land is substantially modified, especially in the revolution theory, according to which what actually lies behind the records, in synthesis, is a peasantry revolt against the oppressive Canaanite city states in which the forefathers of the Israelite nation played a vital role. Cf. Norman Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of Liberated Israel 1250-1050 B.C.E.* (London: SCM Press, 1979), pp. 191-219. Seen from this perspective, the conflict we have stressed between exodus and settlement is obviously resolved. But since we wonder to what extent this or any other attempt at a historical reconstruction of the Israelite settlement in Canaan is accurate, we still have no real basis for an objective assessment of the fact, as an alternative to the theologically idealized view of the Biblical narrative.

34. Cited by Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, trans. Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), p. 264.

35. Ibid.

36. Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, OTL, 2 vols., trans.

D. M. G. Stalker (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1962), 1, 121–22.

37. Westermann, *Praise and Lament*, p. 260–61.

Notes to Chapter 2

1. Cf. Robert Gordis, *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation and Special Studies* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1978), p. 254.

2. Cf. Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary*, OTL (London: SCM Press, 1985), p. 351.

3. Cf. E. Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, trans. Harold Knight, with a preface by H. H. Rowley (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1967), p. 353.

4. Cf. Mitchell Dahood, review of *Giobbe*, by Camiliano Fedrizzi, in *Biblica* 55 (1974), 287.

5. Cf. E. Kautzsch, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, trans. and revised by A. W. Cowley, 2nd. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), p. 389, § 121f.

6. Cf. N. H. Tur-Sinai, *The Book of Job: A New Commentary* (Jerusalem: Kiryath Sepher, 1957), p. 358–59.

7. Karl F. R. Budde, *Das Buch Hiob*, 2nd. ed. (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913).

8. Cf. Samuel R. Driver and George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job*, ICC, 2nd. ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921), Philological Notes, p. 164.

9. Gordis, *Job*, p.264f.

10. Dhorme, *Job*, p. 354.

11. Cf. Edward J. Kissane, *The Book of Job* (Dublin: Browne and Nolan Ltd., 1939), p. 150.

12. Cf. Marvin H. Pope, *Job: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, AB, 3rd. ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1973), p. 174 f.

13. Cf. L. Alonso Schoekel and J. L. Sicre Diaz, *Job: Comentario teológico y literario* (Madrid: Ediciones Cristiandad, 1983), pp. 344, 348.

14. Cf. Salomon Frensdorff, *The Massorah Magna* (New York: Ktav Publ. House, 1968) [a photolithographic copy of the Hannover, 1876 ed.], on Hos 2:8; *Okhlah W'Okhlah*, ed. S. Frensdorff (Hannover: Hahn'sche Hofbuchhandlung, 1864), p. 120f., l. 191.

15. Cf. Pope, *Job*, p. 176.

16. Cf. Driver-Gray, *Job*, Phil. n., p. 165.
17. Dhorme, *Job*, pp. 356-58. See also the good critical summary of Schoekel, *Job*, p. 349, on this verse.
18. See also Is 21:8; 22:18; Ps 22:14; cf. Gesenius-Kautzsch, *Grammar*, p. 375, § 118r.
19. Cf. Tur-Sinai, *Job*, p. 360-61.
20. Cf. Cyrus H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965), p. 470.
21. Cf. Gesenius-Kautzsch, *Grammar*, p. 421, § 130a.
22. Dhorme, *Job*, pp. 356, 358.
23. Cf. A. Guillaume, "The Arabic Background of the Book of Job", in *Promise and Fulfilment*, ed. F. F. Bruce (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), p. 163.
24. C. F. Houbigant, *Notae criticae in universos Veteris Testamenti libros*, II (Francfort, 1777), pp. 155-218.
25. C. J. Ball, *The Book of Job* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1922), p. 310-11.
26. C. Larcher, *Le livre de Job* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1957).
27. Cf. *BDB*, p. 403a.
28. Cf. Guillaume, "The Arabic . . .", p. 163.
29. Cf. John C. L. Gibson, *Job*, DSB, (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985), p. 189.
30. J. D. Michaelis, *Orientalische und exegetische Bibliothek*, VIII (1775), p. 196.
31. A. Kamphausen, *Die Schriften*, in *Bunsen's Bibelwerk*, III (1868).
32. Pope, *Job*, p. 177.
33. Cf. Gesenius-Kautzsch, *Grammar*, p. 375, § 118o.
34. Gustav Bickell, "Kritische Bearbeitung des Jobdialogs", *VOJ* 6 (1892), 137-47, 241-57, 327-34; 7 (1893), 1-20, 153-68.
35. Cf. Edmund F. Sutcliffe, "A Note on Job XXIV 10.11", *JTS* 50 (1949), 174-76.
36. J. G. E. Hoffmann, *Hiob* (Kiel, 1891).
37. C. Steuernagel, *Das Buch Hiob*, HSAT, II (1923).

38. George Fohrer, *Studien zum Buch Hiob* (Guetersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1963).

39. Scholars have dated the Book of Job from the tenth to the fourth Century B.C. An example of a somewhat average position is that of Gibson, *Job*, p. 3: "I would place it in the period just before the Babylonian Exile around the same time as Jeremiah, say 600 B.C., but I would not object if it were dated a little later." Francis I. Anderson, *Job*, TOTC (Leicester: Inter-varsity Press, 1976), p. 63f., suggesting a date around 750 B.C. and an Israelite setting for "the most definitive stage" of the book, is among those who prefer an earlier dating. Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, trans. Peter R. Ackroyd (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 470, who gives preference for a date about the fourth Century B.C., can represent those who are inclined for a later dating.

40. Cf. James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981; London: SCM Press, 1982), p. 121-22.

41. Cf. Westermann, *The Structure of the Book of Job: A Form-Critical Analysis*, trans. Charles A. Muenchow (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), p. 131ff.

42. Gibson, *Job*, p. 188.

43. Cf. Pope, *Job*, pp. XX, 174, 179.

44. Driver-Gray, *Job*, p. 205-6.

45. Gordis, *Job*, p. 532ff., special note 19.

46. Cf. Idem, *The Book of Job and Man: A Study of Job* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 272; cf. also *Job*, p. 534.

47. Cf. J. M. Plumley's translation of "The Teaching of Amenemope", in D. Winton Thomas, ed., *Documents from Old Testament Times*, (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1958), p. 173f-74.

48. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 176, 179; also John A. Wilson's translation of "Egyptian Instructions", in James B. Pritchard, ed., *ANET*, pp. 421-25.

49. Pritchard, *ANET*, p. 422. Cf. Thomas, *Documents*, p. 179.

50. It seems better to keep the MT form, *rō'eh*, "to feed on" or "to prey on", which is very expressive and makes sense in the context, although the alternative reading of LXX, "ill-treat, wrong" (sometimes preferred), apparently corresponding to *hēra'* (Hiphil of *r''*), Ex. 5:23, seems to make a better parallel. But this reason is not sufficient as to justify the emendation.

51. Habel, *Job*, p. 362.

52. It is possible that it already existed as an entity in the Eighteenth Dynasty (c. 1500 B.C.), but the texts from which its content were drawn go back to the time of the First Intermediate Period and the Middle Empire, i.e., from c. 2200 to 1700 B.C. Cf. Leon Epzstein, *Social Justice in the Ancient Near*

East and the People of the Bible (London: SCM Press, 1986), p. 40.

53. Pritchard, *ANET*, p. 34. See also L. Le Page Renouf and E. Naville, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead: Translation and Commentary* (London: The Society of Biblical Archaeology, 1904), p. 213.

54. Epzstein, *Social Justice*, p. 41.

55. Gibson, *Job*, p. 174.

56. Harold H. Rowley, *The Book of Job*, NCBC, ed. Ronald E. Clements (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans; London: Marshal, Morgan & Scott, 1976), p. 163.

57. Dhorme, *Job*, p. 358.

58. Wilson, *ANET*, p. 424.

59. See R. B. Y. Scott, "Palestine, Climate of", in *IDB*, 3, 621ff; J. J. Bimson et al. ed., *New Bible Atlas* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985), p. 14-15.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 359.

61. Gordis, *Job*, p. 267.

62. Cf. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends*, 2nd. ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1978), p. 107; Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook*, p. 248; id., *Ugaritic Literature: A Comprehensive Translation of the Poetic and Prose Texts* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1949), p. 88.

63. MT is missing the negative particle which is required by the context and supplied by one Ms and Vg.

64. Cf. Gibson, *Job*, p. 85, by the way of his commentary on 9:25-35.

65. Cf. Lambert's translation of "The Babylonian Theodicy" in Thomas, *Documents*, p. 101-2; T. Eric Peet, *A Comparative Study of the Literatures of Egypt, Palestine, and Mesopotamia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), p. 126.

66. Gibson, *Job*, p. 168.

67. Davidson, *Courage*, p. 178.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 174.

69. Cf. Gibson, *Myths and Legends*, p. 102; Gordon, *Ugaritic Literature*, pp. 82f; cf. also John Gray's translation of "Texts from Ras Shamra" in Thomas, *Documents*, p. 121.

Notes to Chapter 3

1. John H. Eaton, *Psalms: Introduction and Commentary*, TBC (London: SCM Press, 1967), p. 60.
2. Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, WBC (Waco, Texas: Word Books Publisher, 1983), p. 159.
3. Dahood, *Psalms I*, p. 92.
4. Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary*, OTL, trans. Herbert Hartwell (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), p. 178.
5. Dahood, *Psalms I*, p. 93.
6. Cf. Craigie, *Psalms*, p. 160.
7. Gibson, *Myths and Legends*, p. 152.
8. For its meaning, cf. Gibson, *ibid.*, p. 143; and also Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook*, p. 372.
9. Dahood, *Psalms I*, pp. 93-94.
10. Cf. Gesenius-Kautzsch, *Grammar*, pp. 396-98, § 124 a, d-f.
11. Arnold Albert Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, NCBC, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1972), 1, 148.
12. Dahood, *Psalms I*, p. 94; see also pp. 19-20.
13. Cf. Gesenius-Kautzsch, *Grammar*, §§ 119 u and 143 e.
14. Cf. *id.*, *ibid.*, p. 347, § 113 gg; Dahood, *Psalms I*, p. 95.
15. W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Psalms*, 2 vols. (London: SPCK, 1939), 1, 159.
16. Edward J. Kissane, *The Book of Psalms* (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1964), p. 68.
17. H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms* (London: Evangelical Press, 1959), p. 116.
18. Cf. Dahood, *Psalms I*, pp. 92, 133-34. See also his review of *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, by Bertil Albrektson, in *Biblica* 44 (1963), 548.
19. Charles A. Briggs and Emilie G. Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, ICC, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1906-7), 1, 127, 135.
20. Anderson, *Psalms*, 1, 150, 266. Cf. also Aubrey R. Johnson, *The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel*, 2nd ed. (Cardiff:

University of Wales Press, 1964), pp. 4-5.

21. Dahood, *Psalms I*, p. 97.

22. Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalmen*, BK, 4th ed., 2 vols. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1972), 1, 129.

23. J. Lindblom, "Bemerkungen zu den Psalmen I", *ZAW* 59 (1943), 9-10.

24. Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, trans. David Eaton, 3 vols. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1887-89; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pbl. Co., 1982), 1, 240.

25. Gesenius-Kautzsch, *Grammar*, p. 461, § 144 l-m.

26. Cf. D. Dario Gualandi, "Salmo 17(16), 13-14", *Biblica* 37 (1956), 199-208.

27. Kissane, *Psalms*, p. 70.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

29. It is identified as 6 l:41-43 in Gibson, *Myths & Legends*, p. 75; cf. also 49:l:13-15 in Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook*, p. 167. For a discussion on the meaning of *hlq* as "to perish", see Dahood, "Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography II", *Biblica* 45 (1964), 408.

30. Dahood, *Psalms I*, p. 93.

31. Hermann Gunkel, *Einleitung in die Psalmen: Die Gattungen der religiösen Lyrik Israels*, posthumously completed by Joachim Begrich, 2nd ed. (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), pp. 117, 172; Kraus, *Psalmen*, 1, XLV, Ll; Westermann, *The Psalms: Structure, Content, and Message*, trans. Ralph D. Gehrke (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1980), pp. 29, 53; Weiser, *Psalms*, p. 66; Christoph F. Barth, *Introduction to the Psalms*, trans. R. A. Wilson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966), pp. 15, 19; Anderson, *Psalms*, 1, 38-39.

32. Weiser, *ibid.*, p. 180.

33. Rainer Albertz, *Persönliche Frömmigkeit und offizielle Religion* (Stuttgart: Calver Verlag, 1978).

34. Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Der bittende Mensch: Bittritual und Klagelied des Einzelnen im Alten Testament* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1980).

35. Cf. the opinion of Walter Brueggemann in "The Costly Loss of Lament", *JSOT* 36 (1986), 59.

36. Eaton, *Psalms*, p. 60; *Kingship and the Psalms*, 2nd ed. (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), pp. 33-34.

37. *Id.*, *Kingship*, p. 33.

38. Cf. Anderson, *Psalms*, 1, 147; Harold H. Rowley states in *Worship in Ancient Israel* (London: SPCK, 1967), pp. 205–6, that we cannot uncritically ascribe to David all the psalms that have "To David" at their head, but he also rejects Engnell's rendering of *l^e dāwid*, "For the King", used in connection with royal rites associated with divine kingship.

39. Johnson, *The Cultic Prophet and Israel's Psalmody* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1979), pp. 243–44.

40. Cf. Hans Schmidt, *Das Gebet der Angeklagten im Alten Testament*, BZAW 49 (1928), 19ff.; L. Delekat, *Asylie und Schutzorakel am Zionheiligtum* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), pp. 222ff.; Walter Beyerlin, *Die Rettung der Bedrängten in den Feindpsalmen der Einzelnen auf institutionelle Zusammenhänge untersucht*, FRLANT 99 (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), pp. 105ff.

41. Cf. von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, OTL, trans. Dorothea Barton, (London: SCM Press, 1966), p. 118.

42. Dahood, *Psalms I*, p. 93.

43. Sigmund Olaf Plytt Mowinckel, *Psalmstudien*, 6 vols. (Oslo, 1921–1924; reprint ed., Amsterdam: Verlag P. Shippers, 1961), 1, 154–57. He states that passages such as Gn 26:24; 28:10ff., and 1 Kg 3:5 show that this kind of oracle was also known in Israel, and that Ps 17:15; 3:6; and 4:9 point to it.

44. The idea of O. Fuchs in *Die Klage als Gebet: eine theologische Besinnung am Beispiel des Psalms 22* (Munich: Koesel Verlag, 1982), p. 321, regarding the individual lament psalms, according to which the temple became a kind of market for such texts (originally the prayers of the laity which had been uttered in the place of need, brought to the temple at the time of thanksgiving, and then revised and made available to other pilgrims), could be accurate at least in part. Some psalms may indeed have originated this way, and it can also be admitted that a stock of prayers, composed and/or revised by professional cultic personnel, was always available in the temple.

45. The possibility of a royal interpretation lays weight on this assumption and even enhances the plausibility of the traditional view of Davidic authorship, as entertained, e.g., by Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 1, 290–91; A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms* (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1902), pp. 78–79; Leupold, *Psalms*, p.154; and Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1–72*, TOTC (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), p. 86.

46. Kissane, *Psalms*, p. 66, divides the poem into four strophes of four verses each, but this is only made possible by the adoption of a series of emendations for which he himself claims at most a high degree of probability. In my view this still sounds too optimistic.

47. This is an area where no consensus can be expected to be achieved, with every single author presenting a different scansion. Cf., e.g., Kraus, *Psalmen*, 1, 129; Oesterley, *Psalms*, 1, 158; N. H. Ridderbos, *Die Psalmen: Stilistische Verfahren und Aufbau Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung von Ps 1–41*, BZAW 117 (1972), 160.

48. Cf. Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques*, JSOTSS 26 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), pp. 282–86.

49. Ridderbos, *Psalmen*, p. 161.

50. Westermann, *Psalmes*, p. 32.

51. See Pritchard, *ANET*, pp. 383–85, for a translation of the text made by Ferris J. Stephens.

52. Cf. the lists given in Geo Widengreen, *The Accadian and Hebrew Psalms of Lamentation as Religious Documents: A Comparative Study* (Stockholm: Bokförlags Aktiebolaget Thule, 1937), pp. 38–41.

53. Cf. for instance Gunkel-Begrich, *Einleitung*, p. 213.

54. Cf. Walter G. Kunstmann, *Die babylonische Gebetsbeschwörung* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1932), p. 12. Widengreen, *Accadian Psalms*, p. 43, is also against such an interpretation, but not without conceding that some desire to please the deity may occasionally lie behind the list of descriptive attributes.

55. The expanded address of Ps 106:1–3, and of the psalms of the Apocrypha (Sir 36:1; Song of the Three Young Men 1:3–5) and Pseudepigrapha (Pss Sol 5:1–2a; 17:1–4) can hardly be compared with those of Babylonian and Egyptian psalms.

56. Harvey H. Guthrie, Jr., *Israel's Sacred Songs: A Study of Dominant Themes* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1966; paperback ed. with additional bibliography, 1978), p. 120.

57. Cf. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel, Its Life and Institutions*, trans. John McHugh (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961), p. 156.

58. Julius Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidenthums, gessammelt und erläutert* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1897), p. 126.

59. Cf. D. R. Ap-Thomas, "Notes on Some Terms Relating to Prayer", *VT* 6 (1956), 230, 232.

60. Cited by Ap-Thomas, *ibid.*

61. *Ibid.*

62. K. Ahrens, "Der Stamm der schwachen Verba i.d. sem. Sprachen", *ZDMG* 64 (1910), 163, cited by Ap-Thomas, "Notes on Prayer", p. 231.

63. Cited by Ap-Thomas, "Notes on Prayer", pp. 235–36.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 238.

65. In the Ugaritic literature, *ahl*, "tent", denotes the dwelling of a deity (cf. Keret 15, iii: 17–19). The reference here could be either to the "tent of meeting" (Ex 37:7–11; Nu 11:16,17), as suggested by Clements, *God and Temple* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), pp. 28–39, or to the Temple in

Jerusalem, as an archaic designation for it (cf. 15:1; 61:4[5]; Is 33:20), a reflection of the tent tradition (cf. 2 Sam 7:4ff.).

66. Dahood, *Psalms I*, pp. 107–8, shows that the motif of a flying winged deity is also documented in the Ugaritic Literature.

67. Kraus, *Psalmen*, 1, 132; Weiser, *Psalms*, p. 181.

68. This is the opinion of Oesterley, *Psalms*, p. 160, and L. A. F. Le Mat, *Textual Criticism and Exegesis of Psalm XXXV: A Contribution to the Study of the Hebrew Book of Psalms* (Utrecht: University of Utrecht, 1957), p. 23.

69. Anderson, *Psalms*, 1, 289.

70. MT has *g°'ālāh*, "redeem her" (i.e., *napšî*, "my life"), which is better rendered "redeem me".

71. Cf. Johnson, "The Primary Meaning of *G'L*", *SVT* 1 (1953), 67–77.

72. In his important monograph, *We Are Like Dreamers: Studies in Psalm 126*, trans. Dinah Livingstone (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1982), pp. 33–34, Beyerlin concludes, with the support of the ancient Aramaic text discovered in *Sefîre* (Syria), that the expression *šûb š°bût* and its variants (including Ps 126:1,4) have nothing to do with the bringing back of deported captives, but that they rather refer to the restoration of an original state, *restitutio in integrum*.

73. Briggs and Briggs, *Psalms*, 2, 231.

74. For a special treatment of the subject see Nelson Glueck, *Hesed in the Bible*, trans. Alfred Gottschalk (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1967), pp. 66–9.

75. MT has literally, "You who love Yahweh hate evil", but I have favoured the rendering of the RSV (except for the substitution of "Lord" for "Yahweh"), which seems more appropriate in the context, taking Yahweh as the subject of stich a, as is the case in the following lines of the verse. This rendering presupposes a slight emendation, i.e., MT *'ôh°bê* and *sin°'û* are respectively read as *'ôhēb* and *son°'ê* (as in Syr).

76. Cf. Helmer Ringgren, *Israelite Religion*, trans. David Green (London: SPCK, 1966), p. 232; Anderson, *Psalms*, 1, 286; 2, 634.

77. Anderson, *Psalms*, 1, 62–63.

78. Barth, *Introduction*, p. 42.

79. Cf. Anderson, *Psalms*, 1, 279–80.

80. This includes five Kethibs (Ps 9:12[13]; 10:12; Pr 3:34; 14:21; 16:19) and one psalm title (Ps 102), as listed in Wigram's *The New Englishman's Hebrew Concordance*, ed. and rev. by Jay P. Green, Sr. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publ., 1984), pp. 965–6.

81. Cf. Kraus, *Psalmen* 1, 217.

82. Anderson, *Psalms*, 1, 390.

83. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas, 2 vols. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 2, 42.

84. Anderson, *Psalms*, 2, 749.

85. This view is congenial to that of Delekat, which although (unjustly as it seems to me) criticized by Eaton, *Kingship*, p. 7, is ingeniously perceptive and insightful. Eaton's royal interpretation of this and many other lament psalms is not totally convincing; his theory seems too all-embracing.

86. MT has, "Fools (^ʿ*wilîm*), because of the way of their transgression and because of their iniquities, were afflicted". RSV follows the authors who emend ^ʿ*wilîm* into *hîlîm*, "those who were sick". But at any rate, vv. 17-20 are clearly dealing with the problem of sickness, and it is the fool who, despising divine instruction, is believed to be punished for his sins through sickness.

87. MT has, "and all their wisdom was swallowed up", which means the same thing, but is more expressive.

88. Albright, "A Catalogue of Early Hebrew Lyric Poems", *HUCA* 23 (1950-51, 1st part), 19.

89. Mowinckel, *Der Achtundsechzigste Psalm* (Oslo: I kommisjon hos J. Dybwad, 1953), p. 30.

90. Id., *Psalms*, 2, 11. This expression has been object of many important discussions, but there is no final solution of the issue as yet. An all-embracing theory like Mowinckel's can hardly be proved to be more than partially true. For special studies on the issue, see for instance Harris Birkeland, *The Evildoers in the Book of Psalms* (Oslo: I Commisjon hos Jacob Dybwad, 1955); Johnson, "The Psalms", *The Old Testament and Modern Study: A Generation of Discovery and Research*, ed. H. H. Rowley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951); George W. Anderson, "Enemies and Evildoers in the Book of Psalms", *BJRL* 48 (1965), 18-29. Brief discussions on the complaint about enemies can be found in Westermann, *Psalms*, pp. 61-67; Barth, *Introduction*, pp. 43-8; Guthrie, *Sacred Songs*, pp. 125-31.

91. Barth, *Ibid.*, p. 46.

92. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

93. Westermann, *Psalms*, p. 66.

94. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

95. MT has *p^oquddâ*, which means "possessions", "laid up wealth" (NEB, "hoarded wealth"; RSV, "goods"), but also "office", which is the sense taken in the New Testament quotation of this verse applied to Judas (Acts 1:20).

96. NASB ("let them seek *sustenance*") and AV ("let them seek *their bread*") supply an object to MT $w^{\circ}dār^{\circ}šû$, "and let them seek", as parallel to the idea of begging expressed in $stich\ a$. However, as suggested by LXX and Vg, it could be an error for $w^{\circ}gôr^{\circ}šû$, "and let them be driven (from)" (so NIV and NEB).

97. LXX and Vg might be right in rendering "in one generation", apparently reading $'ehād$ for MT $'ahēr$. Cf. NEB, "within a generation".

98. Kraus, *Psalmen*, 2, 747. For special treatments of the issue of curse in the Old Testament, see John Gray, "Blessing and Curse", *Dictionary of the Bible*, originally ed. James Hastings, rev. 2nd ed. Frederick C. Grant and H. H. Rowley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963), pp. 109–10; Herbert C. Brichto, *The Problem of "Curse" in the Hebrew Bible* (Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, 1963); Delbert Roy Hillers, *Treaty Curses and the Old Testament Prophets* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964).

99. A list of passages involving curse upon the enemies of the sufferer is offered by Gray, *The Biblical Doctrine of the Kingdom of God* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979), p.87.

100. The translation of $hayil\ kî-yānûb$ as "If riches increase" or "when riches increase" could be misleading, for what is at stake here is not the opposition between "riches when not increasing" (which then could supposedly be trusted) and "riches when increasing" (which are not to be trusted). It is the riches themselves which are not to be trusted. Throughout the psalms riches do not have a good reputation, being mostly associated with the wicked (cf. 73:12, for instance). Besides, as a norm, riches are self increasing. They have a built-in increasing factor. They are power which generates power. Therefore the psalmist ponders (v. 11[12]), "Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this: that power belongs to God". It is very likely that $kî-yānûb$ is an adjectival phrase expressing a quality that is proper to $hayil$. In short, the verse seems to be a warning against anyone giving himself to the task of increasing what he possesses, becoming richer and richer, as if in wealth could be found the ultimate source of hope and power.

101. In other passages involving the certainty of a hearing the vow is not quite clearly recognizable or is simply missing (6:8–10[9–11]; 28:6–9; 31:21–24[22–25]; 41:11–13[12–14]).

102. W. H. Bellinger, Jr., in *Psalmody and Prophecy*, JSOTSS 27 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), p. 79, summarizes the basic argument by saying that "during the cultic ritual, a favourable oracle is directed toward the worshipper who has just uttered his lament. The oracle tells him that Yahweh is with him and will help him. Then the worshipper responds gratefully to the oracle with the expression of certainty". The explanation of the certainty of a hearing as result of a possible *Heilsorakel* was first introduced by Kückler in "Das Priesterliche Orakel in Israel und Juda", *BZAW* 33 (1918), 285–301. His proposal became quite popular among Old Testament scholars, a sample list of which can be seen in Bellinger, *ibid.*, p. 115, note 7.

Notes to Chapter 4

1. As for the appropriateness of the use of the words "eschatology" and "eschatological" in connection with the psalms and the rest of the Old Testament, see our discussion in the section below.

2. G. Fohrer, "Die Struktur der alttestamentlichen Eschatologie", *Studien zur alttestamentlichen Prophetie*, BZAW 99 (1967), 32-35.

3. Mowinckel, *He that Cometh* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956), pp. 125-32.

4. Gunkel, *Einleitung*, pp. .

5. Mowinckel, *Psalms*, 2, 225f. Cf. also p. 224.

6. Ibid., pp. 226, 232.

7. David A. Hubbard, "Hope in the Old Testament", *TB* 34 (1983), 34.

8. Philip R. Davies, "Eschatology in the Book of Daniel" *JSOT* 17 (1980), 38.

9. John Bright, *Covenant and Promise: The Prophetic Understanding of the Future in Pre-Exilic Israel* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), p. 19.

10. von Rad, *Theology*, 2, 114-16; Clements, *Prophecy and Covenant* (London: SCM Press, 1965), pp. 103-107; J. Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), pp. 360-62.

11. Theodore C. Vriezen, "Prophecy and Eschatology", *SVT* 1 (1953), 199-229.

12. Cf. Gunkel, *Einleitung*, pp. 329, 344.

13. Mowinckel, *Psalms*, 1, 129-30. His discussion on the Enthronement Psalms covers pp. 106-192.

14. See Kraus, *Worship*, pp. 205-8; *Psalmen*, 1, 201-5; 2, 647-51. For a brief summary of Kraus's criticism see William S. LaSor, David A. Hubbard, and Frederick W. Bush, *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), p. 515. A more extensive appraisal of the issue can be found in Ben C. Ollenburger, *Zion, the City of the Great King*, JSOTSS 41 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), pp. 24-33.

15. Westermann, *Psalms*, p. 10.

16. Id., *Praise and Lament*, pp. 144-46.

17. Mowinckel, *Psalms*, 1, p. 118.

18. Ibid., p. 115; cf. also p. 114.

19. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia:

Fortress Press, 1979), p. 517; cf. also Helmer Ringgren, *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1956), p. 24.

20. Cf. Gunkel, *Einleitung*, p. 140ff.

21. Mowinckel, *Psalms*, 1, pp. 75-76; cf. von Rad, *ZATW* 58 (1940-41), 216ff.

22. Leopold Sabourin, *The Psalms: Their Origin and Meaning*, 2 vols. (Staten Island, N.Y.: Society of St. Paul, 1969), 1, 166; cf. also p. 167.

23. Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 2, 229.

24. Gunkel, *The Psalms: A Form-Critical Introduction*, trans. Thomas M. Horner (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), p. 24. Cf. also, for this section, LaSor, *Survey*, p. 520-21.

25. For a list of the lament psalms, see p. 154.

26. Hubbard, "Hope", p. 45.

27. Childs, *Introduction*, p. 518.

Notes to Chapter 5

1. Cf. Roland E. Murphy, *A Study of Psalm 72(71)* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1948), p. 3.

2. Delitzsch, *The Psalms*, 2, 301.

3. Anderson, *The Psalms*, 1, 521.

4. Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, 5th ed. (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), p. 309.

5. Several different interpretations of v. 15 are reviewed by Murphy, *Psalm 72*, pp. 35-39, but none of them seems adequate as a whole.

6. Weiser, *The Psalms*, p. 504.

7. Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, p. 257.

8. Cf. Murphy, *Psalm 72*, p. 16.

9. Cf. Dahood, *Psalms*, 2, 179-80.

10. Thomas Hanks, "The Kingdom of the Poor: Perspectives from Psalm 72", *Occasional Essays* (Costa Rica) 1 (June 1983), 50.

11. Cf. Murphy, *Psalm 72*, pp. 6-14, where he deals with the subject of the verbs and literary form of Psalm 72.

12. Mowinckel, *Psalms*, 2, 62-63. As one might expect, he also argues

that the prophetic element in the intercessory prayer has its natural cult-historical explanation.

13. H. Cremer, *Biblish-theologisches Wörterbuch*, 7th ed., Gotha, 1893, pp. 173–75; quoted by von Rad, *Theology*, 1, 371.

14. Ibid.

15. Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, OTL, trans. J. A. Baker, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), 1, 249.

16. von Rad, *Theology*, 1, 370, note 2.

17. E. R. Achtemeier, "Righteousness in the OT", *IDB*, 4, 80.

18. See Miranda, *Marx and the Bible*, with special reference to pp. 33–199.

19. Thomas Hanks, "Kingdom", p. 72.

20. Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg, "Die Entwicklung des Begriffes *mišpāt* im AT", *ZA W* 40 (1922), 34; quoted by Miranda, *Marx and the Bible*, p. 83.

21. Miranda, *ibid.*, p. 137; cf. also p. 112.

22. Volkmar Hertrich, "κρίνω", *TDNT*, 3, 927.

23. See Miranda, *ibid.*, for the corresponding biblical references.

24. The use of the Aramaic cognate of the Hebrew root *dyn* (seven times) is not included in the other figures.

25. For a special study of *dîn*, see G. J. Botterweck and V. Hamp, "*dîn*", *TDOT*, 3, 187–94.

26. Murphy, *Psalms* 72, p. 20.

27. C. J. Labuschagne, *The Incomparability of Yahweh in the Old Testament*, Pretoria Oriental Series, ed. A. van Selms (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966).

28. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 99–100.

30. Weiser, *The Psalms*, p. 559.

31. Gottfried Quell, in "δική", *TDNT*, 2, 175, note 3, states that it is a mistake to translate *hesed* as "love". He suggests that "faithfulness", although not wholly adequate, is a more correct rendering, for "it never denotes a personal feeling, but always volitional attitude oriented to the concept of law. . . . the attitude denoted by *hesed* is required by objective considerations". It is true that "faithfulness" is the word most commonly used to translate *hesed*, but it is equally true that these Hebrew terms are synonyms. As long as the covenantal connection of *hesed* is understood, it can be correctly rendered

either as "loyalty" or "faithfulness".

32. BDB, p. 776.

33. A. George, "Pauvre", *Supplement au Dictionnaire de la Bible*, ed. Henri Cazelles and Andre Feuillet, 10 vols. publ. (Paris: Letouzei & Ane Editeurs, 1966), 7 (1966), 387. See also Hanks, "Kingdom", pp. 52-57.

34. P. Humbert, "Le mot biblique èbyôn", *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie religieuses*, 1952, pp. 1-6; quoted by A. George, "Pauvre", p. 387.

35. Botterweck, *TDOT*, 1 (1977), 36.

36. Cf. H.-J. Fabry, "Dal", *TDOT*, 3, 208-30, and Hanks, "Kingdom", pp. 55-57.

37. Fabry, *ibid.*, p. 227.

38. H. F. Fuhs, "Dākā; dākā; dōk; dak; dq; daq", *TDOT*, 3, 205-6.

39. P. Bonnard, "Righteous", *Vocabulary of the Bible*, ed. Jean-Jacques von Allmen (Guildford and London: Lutterworth Press, 1958), p. 373.

40. As we have already indicated elsewhere, Mowinckel's interpretation of *pō'alê 'āwen* as referring exclusively to "sorcerers" is not convincing. On this see note 90 on p. 391.

41. Gordon, *Before Columbus* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1971), pp. 136-37. Cf. also pp. 113-15.

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 170, 206. His chain of arguments is in fact found spread throughout the book, and should be treated with caution rather than with total scepticism. One particularly difficult issue in this connection is the still debated genuineness of the Phoenician Text from Parahyba, Brazil, long held as spurious by a number of scholars. In his book as previously in his article "The Authenticity of the Phoenician Text from Parahyba", *Orientalia* 36 (1968), 75-80, Gordon reopens the case arguing on linguistic basis for its authenticity. He concludes that "The linguistic oddities that have cast suspicion on the text actually support its genuineness. No forger who knew enough Semitics to compose such a document would have committed so many apparent errors. Now that nearly a century has passed, it is obvious that the text is genuine, because subsequently discovered Phoenician, Ugaritic, and other Northwest Semitic inscriptions confront us with the same "errors". . . . To deny the authenticity of the Parahyba text is to attribute prophetic inspiration to the forger" (*Ibid.*, pp. 75-76). For a different opinion based on presumed circumstantial evidence, and the indication of further literature, see Geraldo I. Joffily, "L'Inscription Phénicienne de Parahyba", *ZDMG* 122 (1972), 22-36.

43. Cf. Murphy, "Psalm 72", p. 30.

44. Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1955), pp. 9-10. In connection with the current that nourishes the holy city he cites Is 8:6 and Ez 47.

45. Cf. Dahood, *Ugaritic-Hebrew Philology* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965), p. 22; Anderson, *Psalms*, 1, 523-24.

46. For a summary of the arguments concerning a possible connection between Ps 72 and the Year of Jubilee, see Hanks, "Kingdom", pp. 74-78.

47. RSV; cf. Is 32:1, 2; Dt 32:2; Ho 6:3; Job 29:23; Pr 16:15.

48. Murphy, *Psalms* 72, pp. 40-41. He points to the fact that this verb, with the meaning of "to quake, shake" is used of the earth, heavens, etc., as in Is 9:4. But we should note that the verb is used here applied to the grain of the fields moved by the wind, and this is the context in which its meaning must be explained. To rely on a doubtful emendation of the text seems totally unnecessary in this case.

49. "World" here is the translation of *tēbēl*, which in v. 13 is parallel to "peoples" and the object of Yahweh's judgment (*špt*) with justice (*sedeq*). In view of this the meaning of 97:106 can be thus explained: Human society shall be established (i.e. stably organized through justice) so as not to be moved (i.e. shaken or disrupted), for, as the following verse states, "He shall judge the peoples in equity".

50. MT has a 2nd person, "shall worship before *you*". However, the 3rd person, supported by the ancient Versions (LXX, Syr, and Jr), seems more appropriate to the context.

51. Weiser, *The Psalms*, p. 504.

Notes to Chapter 6

1. See, for instance, Miller and Hayes, *A History*, pp. 307-63. Here perhaps we should also include the special monograph by Morton Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion: Assyria, Judah and Israel in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries B.C.E.*, SBL Monograph Series 19 (Missoula: Scholar Press, 1974), which presents a description and analysis of the religious and political situation of Judah and Israel under the Assyrian influence and control.

2. The annals of Sennacherib provide a full account of how desperate was the situation inflicted upon Judah. Cf. Pritchard, *ANET*, pp. 287-88.

3. George L. Robinson and Roland K. Harrison, "Isaiah", *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley et al., rev. ed., 3 vols. published (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979-), 2 (1982), 886.

4. Cf. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (London: SPCK, 1984), p. 81. This picture of overall prosperity in Israel in the time of Jeroboam II has been questioned on archaeological grounds by J. K. Geus, "Die Gesellschaftskritik der Propheten und die Archäologie", *ZDPV* 98 (1982), 50-57. A. Graeme Auld, in *Amos*, OTG, ed. R. N. Whybray (Sheffield: JSOT Press for the Society for Old Testament Study, 1986), pp. 67-68, kindly offers a summary of Geus' article, and concludes by saying that if Geus' is a fair reconstruction "then some of Amos' strictures may have to be assessed against a rather

longer perspective than is often supposed".

5. G. W. Anderson, *The History and Religion of Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 101.

6. Bernhard W. Anderson, *The Eighth Century Prophets* (London: SPCK, 1979), p. 6.

7. J. Alberto Soggin, *The Prophet Amos*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1987), p. 51.

8. This mysterious "it" has been variously interpreted. Cf. Hans Walter Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, Hermeneia, ed. S. Dean McBride, Jr., trans. Waldemar Janzen, S. Dean McBride, Jr., and Charles A. Muenchow (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p. 128. For him "it" refers to Yahweh's word; for Rolph P. Knierim, in "'I will not cause it to return' in Amos 1 and 2", *Canon and Authority*, ed. G. W. Coats & B. O. Long (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), pp. 172ff, "it" is Yahweh's (burning) wrath (cf. NIV); for H. Gese, in "Komposition bei Amos", *SVT* 32 (1981), 89, the phrase represents a threat deliberately ambiguous. It seems to me that it is in fact Yahweh's judgment (RSV) or wrath (NIV) that is here implied, and this is what Amos' audience and early readers might have understood. Compare the interpretative phrase *b°kol-zōt lō'-šāb 'appō* in Is 10:4, expressing the same understanding in a similar situation.

9. Reading *šāpîm* from *swp I* (KB, p. 956; cf. LXX, τὰ πατοῦντα, "those treading"), a root attested in Gn 3:15, instead of MT *šō'apîm*.

10. This prepositional phrase which disturbs meter and syntax may have been a later addition, except perhaps for the word *'eres*.

11. James L. Mays, *Amos*, OTL (London: SCM Press, 1969), p. 45. It should be noted, however, that the article appears only in the massoretic pointing, and not in the consonantal text, which has the preposition *b* affixed to *kesep*. On the other hand, as a generic term *kesep* may be treated as definite.

12. Cf. R. Gordis' arguments in "'Na'alām' and Other Observations on the Ain Feshka Scrolls", *JNES* 9 (1950), 45, where especially in view of the LXX of 1 Sam 12:3 he supposedly recovers the Hebrew word *na'alām*, from *'ālam*, "hide", meaning "bribe", lit. "concealing substance", which should replace the word *na'alayim*, "pair of shoes" in 1 Sam 12:3, but also perhaps here in Am 2:6.

13. Cf. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, pp. 169ff; E. A. Speiser, "Of Shoes and Sheckels", *BASOR* 77 (1940), 15-20.

14. Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, p. 133.

15. Ibid., p. 166.

16. Mays, *Amos*, p. 46.

17. Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, p. 167.

18. Mays, *Amos*, p. 47.

19. Ibid., p. 72.
20. Ibid., p. 91.
21. See Wolff's translation, *Joel and Amos*, p. 230.
22. Auld, *Amos*, p. 62.
23. Wolff, *Hosea*, Hermeneia, ed. Paul D. Hanson, trans. Gary Stansell (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), pp. 172ff.
24. RSV and JB, relying on LXX, seem preferable to me in their reconstruction of the text, reading the last two stichs as a reproach by Yahweh, instead of as the continuation of Ephraim's quotation (cf. NEB, NIV, NASB).
25. Reading *kīš^a'ēr* (cf. LXX, ὡς σάρκας) instead of MT *ka'ašer*, which does not make sense.
26. Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, WBB (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1984), p. 31.
27. Peter C. Craigie, *The Twelve Prophets*, DSB, ed. John C. L. Gibson, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985), 2, 29.
28. Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, OTL, trans. John Bowden, 2nd ed. compl. rewritten (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983), p. 29.
29. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, NCBC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1980), p. 36.
30. Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, p. 227.
31. This is a matter on which we have commented before in connection with the spiritualization of the language of the Psalms, in sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 (on the poor, in particular, see p. 204). As an important rule of thumb it would not be wise to look for spiritualization before the exile; and even after it the original "physical" meaning of "poor" remained. This late developed dual meaning is classically exemplified in the conflicting readings found in Mathews' and Luke's Beatitudes. Cf. Auld's appropriate note on the issue, *Amos*, p. 69.

Notes to Chapter 7

1. Hans Wildberger, *Jesaiiah 1-12*, BKAT (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1972), p. 437.
2. G. B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah*, ICC, 2 vols (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912), 1, 123.
3. R. B. Y. Scott, "The Book of Isaiah", *IB*, 5, 248.

4. Clements, *Isaiah*, p. 123.
5. Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, p. 252.
6. Gray, *Isaiah*, pp. 212, 217, 221.
7. Wildberger, *Jesaiah 1-12*, p. 438.
8. Clements, *Isaiah*, p. 123.
9. G. R. Driver, "Linguistic and Textual Problems: Isaiah I-XXXIX", *JThS* 38 (1937), 39-40.
10. A. B. Davidson, *Introductory Hebrew Grammar: Hebrew Syntax*, 3rd. ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1901), p. 28.
11. Driver, "Textual Problems", pp. 39-40.
12. Gray, *Isaiah*, p. 221; G. W. Wade, *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, 2nd. ed. (London: Methuen & Co., 1929), p. 83.
13. Scott, *Isaiah*, p. 249.
14. Felix Perles, *JSOR* 9 (1925), 126-27.
15. Gray, *Isaiah*, p. 221.
16. Joseph Reider, "Etymological Studies in Biblical Hebrew", *VT* 2 (1952), 115.
17. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, p. 438.
18. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 438-39.
19. Edward J. Kissane, *The Book of Isaiah*, 2 vols. (Dublin: The Richview Press, 1941), 1, 132ff.
20. Cf. Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, p. 251, n. 25.
21. Klaus Koch, *The Prophets*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983-1984), Vol. 1: *The Assyrian Period* (1983), pp. 108ff.
22. Cf. Pritchard, *ANET*, pp. 444-45, 451-52, 606-607, 626-627; W. W. Halo, "Akkadian Apocalypses", *IEJ* 16 (1966), 231-242; A. K. Grayson, "Akkadian Prophecies", *JCS* 18 (1964), 7-30.
23. An attractive stylistic analysis of Is 11:1-16 is presented by Luis Alonso Schökel in "Dos poemas a la paz", *EB* 18 (1959), 149-169, which is reproduced in *Estudios de Poetica Hebrea* (Barcelona: Juan Flors, 1963), pp. 390-404.
24. Koch, *The Prophets*, p. 136.
25. Cf. Sawyer, *Isaiah*, DSB, ed. John C. L. Gibson, 2 vols. (Edinburgh:

The Saint Andrew Press; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984), 1, 120.

26. From a New Testament Christian viewpoint the idea of "stump" can be understood in double perspective or in two stages, namely as representation of the current historical situation of David's house in Isaiah's time, and also as prophetic allusion to the time that preceded the birth of Jesus Christ, when the illustrious Davidic family had lost its throne, its glory, its lustre, and had "returned to its status as an average undistinguished family (cf. Amos 9:11)". H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah 1-39* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968), p. 216.

27. *htr* is so translated in the Inscriptions of Zenjirli of Northern Syria. Cf. the Hadad inscription, lines 3, 9, 15, 20, 25 in Gibson, *Syrian Semitic Inscriptions*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), Volume 2: *Aramaic Inscriptions*, pp. 64ff, where further bibliography is also indicated. A connection with the Akkadian *hattu* and Ugaritic *ht*, meaning "staff, scepter", is also very likely.

28. Speculations have arisen as to which historical figure this verse might be referring. For Tg he was the Messiah, while for the authors of the New Testament he was not only the Messiah, but the Messiah embodied in Jesus of Nazareth. By the way, the use of the word *nēser*, "shoot, sprout, branch", in Is 11:1 seems to have been the only basis for Mathew's assertion that the Messiah should be called "Nazarene" according to what was spoken by the prophets.

29. LXX and Vg form the set of "seven spirits" by substituting "fear of Yaweh" in 2d by "godliness", and by adding 3a to the group of gifts.

30. Koch, *The Prophets*, p. 133.

31. Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, p. 256.

32. It should be noted that the reading "tyrant" fits in very well with the picture of the Assyrian King in the previous chapter and makes the link with it closer.

33. Leupold, *Isaiah*, p. 219.

34. Clements, *Isaiah*, p. 123.

35. This understanding is shared by some Church Fathers, as can be seen in the treatment that Jose P. Miranda gives to the issue in *Marx and the Bible*, pp. 36-39.

36. Cf. Gordon, "Belt-Wrestling in the Bible World", *HUCA* 23, no. 1 (1950-1951), 131-36.

37. An attractive view of the treatment of Nature in the Psalms is offered by C. S. Lewis in *Reflections on the Psalms* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1958), pp. 76-89.

38. In the Sumerian epic myth of Enki and Ninhursag (Cf. Pritchard, *ANET*, p. 38a) and ideal vision of harmony between the animals is presented.

The theme of peace between man and beasts also appears in the Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh (Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 74). Classic authors usually cited in connection with this issue are, for instance, Horace, *Epodes*, 16:53,54; Virgil, *Eclogues*, 4:21,24; 5:60; Theocritus, *Idylls*, 24:84; and Martial, *Epigrams*, 9:73.

39. Kissane, *Isaiah*, p. 143. Calvin interprets the text in a timely and figurative fashion, pointing out that by these images the prophet "means nothing else than that those who formerly were like savage beasts will be mild and gentle. . . ", and that "the people of Christ will have no disposition to do injury, no fierceness or cruelty". *Commentary on the Book of Isaiah*, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1850-54), 1 (1850), 384.

40. Sawyer, *Isaiah*, p. 123.

41. Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, p. 260.

42. Clements, *Isaiah*, p. 124.

43. Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis", *Science* 155 (10 March 1967), 1203-07.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 1206.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 1207.

46. *Ibid.*

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